

District 22 Area 93 Archives  
Interview with Dorothy J. (On-line version)  
March 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.)*

Jim: My name is Jim L. and I am an alcoholic. I am currently the archivist for District 22, Area 93. We are in the Central Coast of California, San Luis Obispo. The interview I am about to record is intended for use internally by Alcoholics Anonymous and its members only. As such, I will be including last names and other identifiers. However, if any portion of this interview is used by the media—press, radio, films, television or the internet—or in a public presentation, then our tradition of anonymity must be respected, and identifiers, other than the first name and the initial of the last name must be omitted.

*(This version of the transcription has been edited to remove identifiers. Therefore, some parts of the interview may appear disjointed.)*

And today, it is by the way Friday, March 6, 2009, I am sitting in the dining room with Dorothy J.

Jim: And I'll tell part of her story before she begins because I was at a meeting a couple of weeks ago where she celebrated her fifty-first birthday of sobriety. Dorothy, would you please tell us how you got to AA?

Dorothy: When I first came to AA, well first of all, I have to start with what happened. In the courts, my then husband, who was an alcoholic.... In those days, we didn't have a lot of places where you could go and recover. And the judge, I had to take him to the judge. And he appeared before the judge, and the judge sent him to Camarillo (*a California State Mental Hospital*) for 3 months. And when his 3 months was—I went there one time to see him in that 3 months. And I had been drunk just the whole time. I remember him saying to me, "You've been drinking a lot lately, haven't you?" And he was introduced to AA through a Catholic priest that was working at Camarillo, and he had talked to him a lot. So when I went back to sign him out of there, he said to me on the way home, "Maybe you'd like to go to an AA meeting." And I thought, "That's wonderful. Anything to keep him sober!" I wasn't thinking about myself. I didn't think I had a problem.

And we went to our first meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> Street in Paso Robles. There were 2 Al-Anon ladies in the room and there were maybe 15 men that were alcoholics. And one other lady was an alcoholic and she had 5 years, which to me, you know, was just amazing! She didn't seem to mingle with anybody else. She'd slip out and go home. So, I never really got to talk to her much.

But my husband then decided that he didn't need AA. He was going to the meetings with a half-pint in his pocket, and on the way home, he would be drinking out of it. And I'd say, "You know, Brian, I don't think you're supposed to do that if you're going to AA". And in the meantime, I'm going into Al-Anon and telling all these sad tales about what I've put up with him and so on, never mentioning my own drinking. I just, I just didn't. I would tell them kind of half-truths about trying to embarrass him, and putting the baby in the buggy and bringing the buggy down to the bar. And the bar...I would wheel the baby and the buggy in the bar. This one time he turned around, looked, saw me and said, "Hi, honey, come on and have a drink". And so I parked the baby and the buggy and he...I started drinking. And some of my friends had to take the baby home. I don't even remember that part of it. Not at all. But I did things like that consistently...an Al-Anon!

And you know, Chuck C. used to come up here quite often, and one night he was speaking at a meeting in Atascadero. And I had been sitting on this proverbial fence, you know, where did I really belong? I would cry at night. I would just...I was just mentally having a bad time, because I knew I wasn't doing the right

thing. I was continually telling half-truths. And one night, Chuck said at a meeting, “If you are even wondering, then you are!” And I thought, oh my gosh, it hit me right between the eyes, and I thought he’s so right. And it was right after that, that I was able to go into an AA meeting and say, “My name is Dorothy, and I am an alcoholic.

Jim: And that was back in 1950...?

Dorothy: It was between ’57 and ’58. I always say ’58, because.... It was just the most relief I had had in some time, that I was to be able to say, “My name is Dorothy, and I am an alcoholic”. And it was, it was, I think, the best thing I ever did in my whole life. Well, I had 5 small children.

Jim: How old were they?

Dorothy: The youngest, he was only 4. They were like 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 when I first came to AA. Just absolutely the smartest move I ever made in my whole life. And you know, that husband and I didn’t make it together. At the time he went back and was having seizures, and he’d pitch through a plate glass in some place. And the police would come and pick him up again. And so finally, I had gone to the Catholic priest there in Paso Robles, and talked to him. He knew, he knew my husband and tried to talk him, to him a lot, to try to convince him that drinking wasn’t the answer. And I went into that church one day to pray, and the priest’s home was right next door to the parish church. And as I was leaving, he came out of his door. He knew us quite well. And he said, “Dorothy, if you don’t do something about this, put this man out of your life before these children don’t have either a mother or a father.” And I thought, well, perhaps that’s what has to happen. I don’t know. But I’d always been taught growing up once you’re married, you’re married for life, I don’t care what happens. And so later, he had another...let’s see...he’d been working in the gas station, and that night, he pitched through the plate glass in the office part, and the police were called up and they came and got him and they took him back to jail.

It was then that I started packing his clothes. And I ironed them all nice and neat and stacked them in this big box for him and cried all the while I’m ironing. And I thought that I’ve got to do this because I’ve got to save my own sanity and my children, you know. I had been...I would leave them alone in the charge of my twelve year old. And the neighbors started reporting me leaving the kids alone. I certainly belonged in AA. I certainly did!

And the day that husband of mine drove off in the car, in his car, and I thought, “Oh, what have I done?” And then he was gone. And I thought, I wonder if his underwear is clean, I wonder if he’s somewhere where he can get his shirt ironed. I was worrying about him all the time. He was more like having a kid, you know. I don’t know...just things fell into place. And he later died of this disease.

And I remarried. I married another man that I met in AA. Oh, AA was just the most beautiful thing that ever happened to me. And I just gained so many friends. It was just absolutely...it was almost like having a big party all the time! And I was emptying ashtrays. And I was washing coffee cups. In those days, they smoked.

Jim: Everybody smoked.

Dorothy: Everybody smoked, and the rooms were just thick with this smoke. So we had a lot of ashtrays and so on.

Jim: You said that you went to the meeting in Paso Robles on 14<sup>th</sup> Street?

Dorothy: Yes.

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Jim: Is that the same location that it is now?

Dorothy: Absolutely the same place.

Jim: And do you know how long it's been there?

Dorothy: Well it must have been there a couple of years before I got there. And that was in '57. They were meeting there then.

(Telephone rings; there is a break in the interview.)

Dorothy: Anyway....

Jim: Now, back then, there weren't that many meetings in the county during the week. How many were there?

Dorothy: There was one over here; there was one in Morro Bay, which later developed into 2 meetings a week. There was Pioneer in San Luis, which was meeting up at some old house somewhere. There was no Alano Club then. And Melody, which met there for years up...

Jim: The same, same place as now...

Dorothy: Yes, ah ha, for years. And we had the one in Paso, and where else was...

Jim: Atascadero?

Dorothy: Atascadero, because I then moved to Atascadero and went there every Friday night to a meeting.

Jim: And where in Atascadero was....?

Dorothy: That was where the big, old dome building is in the heart of Atascadero, where the...what do they call that? We called it the big, old dome building.

Jim: It's the one that's now closed because earthquake...

Dorothy: Yes, yes. We met every Friday night there.

Jim: Were there any in South County?

Dorothy: Uhm, you know, I don't remember. I know Santa Maria had meetings. And we were all one group then. We weren't divided into two separate entities then.

Jim: You mean you and Al-Anon?

Dorothy: No, AA.

Jim: AA, OK.

Dorothy: It was all one...

Jim: This is before the district was divided.

Dorothy: Yes. And let's see. They had....I'm trying to think where else they had some meetings.

Jim: Up in Cambria?

Dorothy: I don't remember any up there. And there were no morning meetings. There were no noon meetings. There were no 5:30 in the afternoon. You went to one meeting a day and that was at 8 o'clock at night. That's the only meetings that they had. You know today it's wonderful how it's spread.

Jim: Back then, if you wanted to go to one meeting a day, you would drive around the county.

Dorothy: You had to! Yeah. So we'd all pile into some car, and then we would go from Paso over here to Morro Bay for a meeting, and usually that was Sunday night. I have to think sometimes to see where else. If you wanted to go Monday night, I think it was Pioneer at an old house. And I don't remember where Tuesday night was.

Jim: Do remember when Pioneer moved into...when did the Club start?

Dorothy: You know, I don't remember. I don't know. My second husband was involved in that, getting that started, but I can't for the life of me remember what year that was.

Jim: What was his name?

Dorothy: Val K.

Jim: Val K.?

Dorothy: Yeah. Just K. And so we moved there to Atascadero. And he took on raising my five kids, which was...that was quite an endeavor for him, I'll tell you. He was so good with the kids.

And so the meetings there were Friday nights. And I think I went to Melody on Wednesday nights. It seemed like we would do a lot of pool riding, all get in one car and make the trip over here. Or we'd go into San Luis or whatever. We were overly generous at helping each other out.

We had a man named Herman B. in Paso Robles that absolutely...he had a...his house was open to anybody, you know, that was in AA. And he would...if they hadn't been fed, he'd cook them breakfast. He was just a good, all around AA member who took care of people.

And along with all the others that I knew in Paso, they all have passed away, a little at a time.

And when we moved to...when I married Val and moved to Atascadero, we went to meetings every night of the week. And it was just so nice. Our kids were so happy.

Jim: Happy to have you sober, or happy to have you out of the house?

Dorothy: I don't know. I think they were happy that I was sober! Yup, they liked that.

And so it was just...everything seemed to kind of fall into place. And then this husband...we were married eleven years...he died of cancer of the throat. And he...but he did a good job in those eleven years helping

my kids out. And we were just steady AA people. We just went... And they used to have a breakfast meeting once a month over here at the...what's the name of the reception...I can't think of the name of it.

Jim: In Morro Bay?

Dorothy: Yes.

Jim: The Inn in Morro Bay?

Dorothy: It wasn't the Inn in Morro Bay at that time. I'm trying to think what it was. And we had speakers come in and have our breakfast and coffee.

(Here the interview takes a water break.)

Dorothy: Where were we?

Jim: I was about to ask you if when you came in were any of the original AA people in the area still alive?

Dorothy: Ah ha. Like Bud and Bob H. from Melody. And Birdie, Bob's wife. And Blackie, who is still with us today.

Jim: And you also mentioned that you came in, sort of...you didn't come in through "the back door", because you didn't actually come in through Al-Anon, you came through sort of "the side door". And so, there was Al-Anon active at that time.

Dorothy: Two women.

Jim: Two women, in all the county?

Dorothy: You know, there had to have been a group in San Luis Obispo, but they were just a handful.

Jim: And your two women were in Paso.

Dorothy: Yes, they were. And their husbands were both members of, sober members of AA.

Jim: Now when you got involved with AA...and I don't want you to be overly modest now...what were some of the things that you did that helped AA along the way? Were you a group officer or an area officer or anything like that?

Dorothy: I was secretary of the group. And I was the official cake maker. I was always the...I made cakes for 40 years in AA! I made cakes for every birthday we had. And I did general...I can't think.

Jim: GSR?

Dorothy: GSR, I did that. Those were all things I did when I was up in North County. And then I did treasurer of Wednesday night meeting, and I was that for quite a while. What else did I do?

Jim: Did you have any district offices?

Dorothy: No, I didn't. I didn't do that. When we moved to Atascadero, and I married Val, our house was the Alano Club of the area. Val always said, "The coffee pot is always on. Please stop by." And so we had  
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members coming by all day long. They'd come and sit and visit. If Val was home too, it was good. It was just part of what we did. And then we started having book studies in our home. And then once in a while, someone else would take it to their house. And that was when I think I learned the most of the real program of AA, you know, reading the Big Book and so on. That was very good for me, to get into the depth of the program a little better.

Jim: OK. The...when you first came in, did you get a sponsor?

Dorothy: Never had even heard of such a thing as a sponsor!

Jim: When did that start coming about?

Dorothy: Oh, gosh! It had to be fifteen years later that I was alerted to people getting sponsors or something. I said to Birdie one day, "Anybody ever say anything to you about getting a sponsor?" She said, "No." I don't have any idea when it became more apparent that it was a good idea to have a sponsor. And then I sponsored several women in the North County when I was there. I kind of halfway sponsor C..... now. She calls me every week and says, "You know, you're my sponsor." Oh, dear.

Jim: So, uhm, like now it is traditional that people will go through their steps with a sponsor. How did you go through the steps when you came in?

Dorothy: You know, I started working with an AA lady up there in the North County, and we kind of did it together. It was just strange. I didn't realize that I was helping her that much, or that she was helping me. But we did those steps together.

Jim: You were co-sponsors, then.

Dorothy: Yeah. Kind of that's what we did. And I don't think we were calling it sponsoring. We'd read the book together, and we'd go through the steps together. But I hadn't heard the sponsorship thing, and I never ever really had a sponsor. So, but I think it's a very good for people coming into AA to have someone they can look up to and go over things that are bothering them in their lives and being able to talk on a one-to-one basis to someone. That's all so important. We kind of...when I look back now, it was like the whole group was sponsoring you. That's what happened.

Jim: Now, what did you do back then for 12 Step work?

Dorothy: We had a phone that would ring. Someone would call us, and it might have been Herman who had it (*the phone*) at his house. My phone would ring and someone would say, "We have a call for you. Get another gal and go see her." And they'd tell us where they were calling from.

Jim: Who would be these people who would be calling you?

Dorothy: It was AA. Somebody had the phone in their house.

Jim: OK.

Dorothy: And I think this was printed in the paper, the phone. And so, I had some very interesting calls that I made on people. It was so different! And two of us would always go together. I had some very interesting experiences.

Jim: How was it different?

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Dorothy: Well, I don't think today that people go out to people's homes anymore and call on people like we did. Have you ever experienced anyone going out to anyone's home for their first time call?

Jim: Not here in San Luis or Morro Bay, but in Santa Fe that would happen occasionally. And I personally had one call where someone called me, "Would you go and pick somebody up and take him to a meeting?" And I did what we're told not to do. I went by myself and picked the guy up and took him to the meeting. It took me three weeks to get my car aired out after having him there. We actually never got him into the meeting. I had to get some help and take him to the hospital rather than to take him to the meeting. But here I haven't heard of anyone called to go to someone's home, although I know that that happens, because I volunteer at Central Office and we get calls at Central Office and we'll transfer them to people on the 12 Step call list. And I know that some of those people do go visit in homes.

Dorothy: Oh, that's good, because that is certainly what happened with us and there was always two of us. You know, one call in particular, we were up in the old hotel, the Carlton Hotel in Atascadero, that is now all remodeled and redone. This gal, she had nothing to her name but a cat named Mike. And that cat was under the bed all the time. And she had kind of a sawed-off shotgun lying on the bed. But it looked like an antique or a relic. I don't know if it worked. And so, but that time the police came and took her to psycho, because she was really very bad. I found out later that she was in psycho. Before she got strong enough to come out...she had a cat and her cat's name was Mike. And so, she asked me if my husband and I would take the cat while she was there. And we said sure, we'd take the cat. Well, when she got out of psycho, I remember that her hair was just grey and straggly. And she had been a beautiful red head, who doubled for Greer Garson in the movies. She would ride a horse, whatever. She'd been raised by wealthy people. She'd throw her clothes on the floor and the maids would pick it up and so forth. And to think she'd wind up in some old, dirty hotel with nothing to her name.

Jim: Except Mike.

Dorothy: Yeah, except a cat, Mike.

Jim: Did you keep Mike?

Dorothy: We kept Mike. You bet. We had a pet pigeon that used to ride on the back of our dog, on the dog's back and ride all over outside. But the cat got our pigeon one day. We didn't know what was going on until we saw the feathers on the cat's paw. And so, my husband was so upset, he said, "Get that cat out of here!" And about that time, she drove up in her car. And so, she took her cat, and was so thankful we'd taken care of her cat. But you know, she later...she worked in like some of those rest homes and one day she had enough money she bought a taxicab business up there. She did well.

Jim: She sobered up and she did OK.

Dorothy: She did OK. And then after I moved over here, I don't know whatever happened to her. I don't know if she moved. She never called me.

It's just strange some of the 12 Step calls. There was one lady, and we had a man with us that time, and so I started to go to the door, and there she was, in the screen door, and stark naked! Did you here me tell that story?

Jim: No.

Dorothy: And I said to the man, I said, "Get back in the truck." I said to her, "Go put some clothes on."

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And so she went and put a slip on or something. And she'd been mourning this dead cat in a shoebox or something. And she had flowers all around it. And she had cats all over her house up there in Atascadero. It just smelled terrible! And she'd been so drunk all this time. She had cats everywhere! And I thought, oh my goodness, what a way to live! You know, that's all she knew, taking care of those cats. And we talked to her for a while, and got her to come to an AA meeting.

And then we went on another call that same day, and that lady was lying in pink sheets, and she had a pink satin gown. You know, just the opposite of this woman. And I thought you know, it doesn't matter where you are in life or what walk of life if you have...if you're sick, you're sick whether you've got money or you're in poverty.

One of the great things that really impressed me was to be able to make those two calls in one day and get them both to come to AA, which was wonderful. You know, those are outstanding in my mind because of how it impressed me. Yep, wonderful.

Jim: Do you know whether those two women are still in the program?

Dorothy: I think they both moved away somewhere else and I never got to follow up on them.

Jim: When do you, do you remember...well, at the time when you came in and the time you were doing the 12 Steps, you had a service which rang at somebody's home and they called you and you did what you do. Which in essence is the same thing that happens now at Central Office, but you remember when Central Office itself began?

Dorothy: Not too many years ago. We haven't had...maybe we've had Central Office 12 years or something, I'm not sure.

Jim: That's not that long.

Dorothy: No. And lot's of the old-timers around here were saying why that's crazy, we're not big enough to have...and they'd all get into this big argument about whether Central Office was something we should be fooling with. But you know, it all works. It works.

Jim: Now, back then we were all part of the same Area as Santa Maria. It went all the way down to Los Angeles, right? *(Jim & Dorothy are incorrectly using "Area" instead of "District".)*

Dorothy: No, I think it stopped at Lompoc. You mean the whole Area?

Jim: The whole Area.

Dorothy: We'd get speakers from LA and so on, but it didn't extend that far. There were just 2 groups; I mean 2 Areas. After they split up from Santa Maria on down through Santa Barbara, I think.

Jim: Now what are some of the changes that you've seen in you time in AA? How's it...it has to be very different now from what it was back in the '60's.

Dorothy: My gosh. We had speaker meetings once a month, which they have today, but...and each group would sponsor a speaker, which they do today...and that was years ago. We'd meet...we always got speakers from out of the area.

Jim: Like Chuck C.

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Dorothy: Yes, like Chuck. And then of course, the no smoking ban came into play, which was good.

And we had potlucks up in Paso a lot at the meetings there. At least once a month, we'd have a potluck and everybody would bring stuff and we'd have a good time.

What else was different?

Jim: Well, we talked about the difference in the twelve stepping, which is a little bit different. How about were there any sort of specialty meetings? When did women's meeting begin?

Dorothy: It seems to me that has not been...the first women's gathering that I remember was Christmas party. And we met at the old Motel Inn in San Luis Obispo, which is not...it's there, but it's not occupied anymore. And there were like 7 of us ladies. Well, today when we have the Christmas Ladies Luncheon, there's at least 200 women there! It's just amazing!

Jim: Is that the same thing that has just grown?

Dorothy: It's just grown! Yes.

Jim: OK.

Dorothy: And, uhm, so there, yeah, were 7, 8 women, I believe at that one. It was so much fun that we decided next year we'll do this again. And it's been going on ever since.

Jim: Do you remember about when that happened? When you had the first one?

Dorothy: I wonder if it was about 1965. That sounds right.

Jim: So it's been going on for about 40 years, then.

Dorothy: Yeah, it's just a long time. And we started having New Years Eve parties at the Grange in San Luis Obispo. I got involved in that. We did stage shows, and I'd sing. We had 3 or 4 women that just had beautiful voices. And then we'd wear costumes. I remember doing the "Indian Love Call". I'm in this Indian garb on stage.

(Jim: We're starting the second side of the tape of the Dorothy J. interview on March 6, 2009.)

Dorothy: So we had these wonderful New Years Eve parties. I'll tell you the one thing that's changed was that we all dressed up to the teeth, long gowns...

Jim: Coat and tie.

Dorothy: Yeah, the whole thing. We really dressed up. And even at the speaker meetings, once a month meetings, we all dressed up and made it a special night. And those New Years Eve parties were so much fun. And one of the ladies, her mother played the piano. So we'd have rehearsal after rehearsal, getting ready for this New Years Eve party. And we did a lot of funny skits. It was just so much fun doing that, but that's been a number of years ago that we did that.

Jim: So we haven't had the New Years Eve party for a while.

Dorothy: It's been quite a while. And it was just so much fun. And then we'd all go into the other room to eat. People would bring food. And I think they barbequed outside. Just a lot of nice things going on.

Jim: Have you noticed...in some places that I've been there have been some problems, controversies, frictions between the Alano Club and the Fellowship. Has that happened around here?

Dorothy: You know, I personally have not noticed it. And of course I'm not going to the Alano Club in San Luis, just for the old-timers get-togethers or something. But I don't...I'm sure there was friction. I would just hear by the wayside that somebody would make a remark. But I personally have not had any of that problem.

I'll tell you some of the problems that we had was the language they use in the meetings.

Jim: OK.

Dorothy: It was just, it was kind of disgraceful.

Jim: Then or now?

Dorothy: Now! It started in just the last few years, where I think a lot of it was mixed with the drug addicts and NA and AA mingling together. And they felt free to express themselves any way they wanted. And it's hard to get them to stop using such foul language. I don't know. And I remember my husband, Val, when he was alive. No, that was Wally! My last husband. I'm sorry.

We were at a meeting, over I guess it was Los Osos. And this young kid got up, and he used every foul word in the book. And he lived with his grandmother. So Wally walked over to him after the meeting and he said, "Do you talk like that in front of your grandmother?" And he said, "Sure." And Wally looked at him and said, "Well, you're sicker than I think!" So I thought, well, maybe kids think a little more before using that kind of language, but I don't think it's necessary. And I think, you know, somebody slips once in a while, that's different. But some of them are just absolutely don't care about another soul in the room. I've always been that way. I just felt that there was a time and a place for everything.

(A break in the interview.)

Jim: When you started out, there were like 7 or maybe so many meetings in the county.

Dorothy: Right.

Jim: When do you think the meetings started to blossom and grow, they just multiplied?

Dorothy: I think it was about 15 years after I was in AA that I noticed the groups getting bigger, and having to start having more meetings. You know they started out with noon meetings. And then I think it branched out to...they started the 7 o'clock meetings in the morning. It's a little early for me!

Jim: Me, too!

Dorothy: I think it's wonderful that they can do that. My step-son, Ted, goes to the 7 o'clock meetings in the morning over here.

Let's see, when else did I notice. That seemed to be the beginning, and people were moving up here from the south, down south, and deciding they liked the area. And they had all been in AA down south, and that just made the...the rooms just got bigger and bigger. It was wonderful!

Jim: Are there any stories that you might have back then about how you worked with local agencies, or doctors or clergymen back in the '60's?

Dorothy: When I lived in Atascadero, we would go up to the high school, and talk to the high school kids about, you know, the dangers of alcohol and what, what could happen to them. Which was all good. We had a church program where we would take messages to the churches and talk to them. And that was all beneficial.

Jim: How about the local medical society?

Dorothy: Well, they were involved in the first...there was a Dr. Middleton, who started sponsoring AA people, and he got them to come to the meetings...and he wasn't a member. He just knew enough about people who got into real trouble alcohol, and he did a lot of good. And he was a doctor and he was in the old French Hospital building. And now they have this new French Hospital there. And that was always a benefit. My family doctor is...absolutely loves Alcoholics Anonymous, and he has been wonderful about suggesting people go to AA. We find a few like that that are just so enthralled with the results of what has happened in Alcoholics Anonymous that he wants to send everybody there. And yeah, he was wonderful, too. So, we have had, and I don't know if you were at Wally's funeral...

Jim: No, I hadn't moved here yet.

Dorothy: And our Catholic priest did the most wonderful thing about praising Alcoholics Anonymous. And he talked about the disease, and what it does to people and families. And he just...he had everybody enthralled with the whole thing. He was so good. And he's not a member. I mean, he doesn't even have a problem. But he's certainly involved with helping other people.

Jim: Well, he certainly has a fondness for you, because I remember him well coming to your 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

Dorothy: Oh yeah, wasn't that nice? Yeah, that was so sweet of him to do that. Yeah, he's a very caring person, and that helps a lot, too. Yeah, that was wonderful. I didn't know he was coming. That was a real surprise!

Jim: Are there any things that you would like to see changed in AA today?

Dorothy: I really don't think so. I wish somehow we could clean up some of the language, but you know, it's just like they say, well, they're there. And some day they may grow out of this, or they'll grow up! And then it will be for everybody's benefit, including theirs. You can't ask somebody to leave because of that. They didn't even ask me to leave when I started going into open AA meetings. I wouldn't say I was an alcoholic. And they let me come in there and sit and listen.

So, you know, I can't really think of anything I would want to change. It's all so beneficial. I've learned how to live. I've learned a new way of living. I have all my family that love me to death. And I love them. It's a miracle every single day that I didn't lose any of my children. And I thank God for that. And I think God played a real part in my life. At first I thought He doesn't want anything to do with me after what I did, you know. But now I know that I was always cared for and loved. And that was important. And I have so much fun today in AA! And we go to the ladies' meetings, and we go into the open AA meetings and book

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studies. I'm taking them all in! And that's why I'm glad that I try to get out at least 4 nights a week, if I can. And I don't drive any more, but it's been wonderful to have people like Cathy, and Mary P., and some of the girls come and pick me up or Susan or any of them are just willing to come and get me and take me to all these things. We've been taking a meeting into Mary Ellen at her home.

Jim: How is she?

Dorothy: She surprised us last week. She was up and in a walker! And the last few times we had been there, she was in a ...they'd have to lift her from the wheelchair into a big chair while we had the meeting, which she just loved, and so that was inspiring to see her up and using her walker. But she was tired. It was time for us to go home. We had a very short meeting. But it was time for her to rest. You know, I'm sure that she's getting a lot of guidance. Dan has been absolutely wonderful to her, her husband. And they're sharing this, which is...he's been right by her side all the time.

Jim: Were you there at the birthday...?

Dorothy: Oh, I missed that!

Jim: ...when Dan took his cake, and Mary Ellen came to the meeting, just to be there for his birthday?

Dorothy: Yeah, I missed that Wednesday night and I was so...but Cathy told me about it. And she said, "Oh, Dorothy, I wish you could have been there!" I can't remember if I wasn't feeling good, or what but I didn't make it. But when she told me that, it gave me the shivers that she was able to come in there and be at his birthday night. Wasn't that wonderful?

Jim: It was terrific!

Dorothy: Yes!

Jim: Are there any questions you would like to ask me?

Dorothy: How long have you been in this neighborhood? I mean in this area?

Jim: Neighborhood? You mean Morro Bay? Well, I started dating Paul back in April of 2004. I actually met him in 2003, but we didn't start dating until 2004, and I and he commuted back and forth between Santa Fe and here...

Dorothy: Oh, yes.

Jim: ...until I moved here 2 years ago. And I haven't left, and I have no plans to leave.

Dorothy: You like it here.

Jim: I like it. I like it.

Dorothy: Yeah, it's a wonderful spot. I think, was it Ted who came this morning...he's my step-son...he comes by quite often in the mornings, maybe 3 mornings a week for a cup of coffee. He promised his dad he would take good care of me, and so he's been very good about that. He said he was at your home. Was it Paul's birthday or something? And he said what a nice home they have, that it was just beautiful with a garden out back. They have a garden.

Jim: Well, we're in a new home.

Dorothy: You're in a new home.

Jim: We just moved the end of, the beginning of January to a larger house on Kodiak on the other side of Highway One. The houses that each of us were living in were just too small for 2 people, and so we just recently bought another one and moved.

Dorothy: How nice!

Jim: It's working out beautifully.

Well, what I'm going to do this tape is that I going to take it home, hopefully get it onto a CD, and one of the copies of the CD will go to the Central Office, another copy will go to the Archives down in Oxnard. I'll keep one, and I'll make you one. And I transcribe these things, and so you will get a copy of the transcription.

Dorothy: Oh, how nice!

Jim: And I don't edit the transcription, so you're lucky you didn't use any bad language.

Thank you, Dorothy, this has been a pleasure.

Dorothy: Thank you.

*Transcribed by Jim L.*