

Ohh Shazam I was hoping they'd turn the lights way down low so my name is Marita and I am an alcoholic hi gang and there goes my cane ohh I just want to tell you how honored I am to be here um please show me you guys are my people you know they say that when you come to a you find your family and for me when I go to meetings I see all my cousins I see my aunts and uncles and some of the crazy uncles you know they're all there but when I come to process I see my brothers and my sisters you know you guys are my family Scott and Nancy and I have been traveling together for a very long time we all served as panel 99 delegates of 49 delegates but it that means it's 1999 so like I know a lot of you hadn't quit drinking in 1999 but we've been I'm depressed ever since on our own dying because you guys are that important and what you do is so important and so for me to stand here with you is probably an honor I'll never forget so thank you kanani thank you for inviting me you know somebody asked me a lot of you have asked me what I'm going to talk about tonight and I said I got no idea because this is different yes you get my regular story but I hope you get a lot of other things and I say I hope because I'm hoping God shows up and then we'll hear what we're supposed to hear so let me just start I was the oldest daughter which means child number three of four growing up born and raised in Philadelphia I should start with my sobriety date so that you don't have to calculate all these things my current sobriety date is November 1 1981 my Home group the caring and sharing group in Mesquite NV which is about 90 miles past any length in Nevada and so I grew up in this family and my brother's names are bill and Bob I also have a sister and her name is Barb my name does not start with B I was four years old by the time I decided that I didn't belong to this family that I must have been adopted that everybody's name started with B except for mine of course later I realized William and Robert were their names but at 4:00 I already knew I don't belong different I don't know how to fit in with this group hide that was my first response just hide and so I kind of tried to stay under the radar I lived in a neighborhood that was lovingly referred to as Hanukkah heights it was a Jewish neighborhood I'm Irish Catholic there was another Irish Catholic family in the neighborhood but guess what guess who didn't feel like she'd fit in again you know he got to have a whole different set of holidays than I got you know they got parties when I didn't get them I mean they turned 13 got parties I didn't get to party tonight I didn't get parties. But I didn't get those you know I just went through life cataloging all the ways that I was different didn't fit it's just my mind works who knows if I was born that way I just know that's how I processed my life I could tell you about my family it wasn't the best it wasn't alcoholic it just wasn't a really great experience but that's not why I'm alcoholic because I have three other siblings and none of them are alcoholic so I can't blame my family experience so I go through life trying to find a way to make it look like I fit in when I don't and so I don't know how many of you guys did this but I was on the peripheral of every group I belonged to right on the edge never part of but never out either and that's how I went through life and I was comfortable there because nobody was paying attention to me which is why it's so hard to stand here So what happens when you do that is you became a shapeshifter you know I was whatever I thought the people around me thought I should be at the moment so like I hung out with the kids that were real partiers and I was a partier I went to church on Sunday with all the churchgoers and knew all the songs and sang in the choir you know whatever it took to make it look like I fit one of these great adventures when I was 13 was I belonged to an activity after school and we read to ride a bus to the activity and I had

two friends all girls Catholic school two friends and we were sitting in the back of the bus because you know it's close enough to hear everything but not close enough to be in it and so we're sitting on the back of the bus and GAIL pulls out this bottle of wine and she says hey we're gonna drink today I've never drank anything in my life what I was set up for that moment because I know how to get along I know how to do whatever you're doing so it looks like I belong even when I don't so GAIL takes a drink then Judy takes a drink then I take a drink then Judy takes a drink then GAIL takes a drink then Judy takes a drink and I thought I want to sit in the middle next time that's my definition of alcoholism I'm not even drunk yet and I already know I want twice as much I need to sit in the middle and you know I can remember like a lot of people do that very first drink when it goes down ohh I didn't know that I was going through life to drink shy to be OK but that's what I was by the time that second one went down I felt good I felt like I belonged I was part of you know the story we've all done it it what's makes us feel OK no point did I think I don't like the taste of it never I don't remember what it tasted like I remember what happened to me and how I felt nothing mattered then nothing at all I was fine the world was fine so we drank that bottle and we went on our way that afternoon and I decided that instead of Judy being my best friend GAIL was now my new best friend and I tried to find alcohol every chance I could every way I could my family was pretty physical growing up and so I learned how to live under the radar and so one of the things I discovered when I drank was if I'm on the honor roll and I'm doing everything I'm supposed to be doing nobody's going to be checking what else I'm doing and so that was my goal in high school was to be as perfect as possible so that what I did with my off time was my own and that's the way I drank I drank as often as I could when I could where I could didn't matter what it was I just wanted more you'd think in high school you'd think well that I don't you know you don't really need to drink never crossed my mind and it wasn't until I was five years sober that it didn't cross my mind that most 13 year olds don't drink that if you're already doing that there might be a problem but that was who I was well because I did so well in school they offered me a scholarship to go to out of town college and have been born and raised in Philadelphia and when Chicago called and said they'd like to have me come there I was ready to go because I had created enough havoc and enough of these pockets that I I was starting to act more like me under the influence than I was the people around me and so I'm constantly trying to change my groups of people so they fit how I am when I'm drinking rather than who I was when I wasn't so I say ohh I would love to go to Chicago because I think I'm going to get a brand new start no I I graduated early I was a little over 16 so I have a relative in this city which was why my parents would let me go and so my uncle had my mother and I out well we looked at the college and one of the first things he did was he came out with these beautiful wine glasses you know I'm 16 maybe 15 still at that point and he hands them to us and he gives me a wink and my mother goes Oh my God you're not giving marita anything to drink he said of course not she has grape juice and he had given my mother the grape juice and made the wine I knew I was gonna love Chicago no doubt about it at the end of my freshman year I'm so old that they did things differently back then at the end of my freshman year they sent a letter home to my parents not me saying congratulations your daughters made the Deans list a da da da da and they were really happy and then the next day the second letter came and it said well the behavior isn't really an issue she can't get home on time she's drunk a lot ohh this and so their theory was that they would like put me on probation for a semester I like to look good I don't want to look like the guy on probation and so there was this guy that I had been seeing my freshman year of college and he followed me back to Philadelphia and then my parents said well we're not sure she should go back to Chicago and so the simplest solution was we got married you know that's what we do you know we look for a solution that works so we can continue being who we are and who I was with somebody who liked to drink I didn't have to go to

school anymore I could just be a housewife and drink I thought well it didn't quite work out that way but we got married I should stay here now for those that don't know you me I have been widowed 3 times once in my 20s once in my 40s and once in my 60s so you can ohh but it's just part of life you know I got gifts from all three of those people my first husband didn't drink he really liked drugs and that made us the perfect match I never touched his stuff he never touched mine I thought we were going to be happy forever now my drinking continues to progress while I'm doing all these life events and so I have this first child just shy of two years being married my son Patrick is born and back then they had a special occasion that they would give the couple the new parents and you got this dinner the night you're in the hospital 5 days that's unheard of now but that was what was traditional then and the night before you went home they made this little candlelight dinner in your room with cable clothes and all this sort of just and they served wine and that was to help new mothers relax a little bit so that it made it easier for breastfeeding later so this bottle of wine comes in with the dinner and kids are OK must be OK and so my husband didn't drink so I drank his I drank mine and we went home the next day and I figured it must be OK to drink while you're breastfeeding you know who knows so Fast forward 14 months later I'm back in the same hospital having my second child I did say we were Irish Catholics right and so I'm having my second child we're having the 2nd dinner I know what to expect so I drink the bottle of wine before my husband ever shows up he shows up goes out and tells them we didn't get a bottle of wine they didn't deliver it so we get the second bottle of wine I drink both those glasses and then when he's going home that night I say you should tell them they should give us a bottle go since we had to wait for the first one that is the progression of alcoholism in 15 months I went from oh I'm going to hit his and mine and then went on with my life to I want his and mine and yours and yours and let's get some more for the road just in case you know it's not that far to my house but just in case so I had my my progression of my alcoholism and I it was a little it's made me realize like 3 or 4 days later I was like huh that's odd you know I'm 21 and my husband had had a series of attempted suicides in the years we're married and so it was thought best that one of us work so I went to get a job and I happened to have some political family and so I was offered a job working for the secretary's office the department of motor vehicles it's called most places but my job was a hearing officer and so I handled drunk drivers accidents without suspension anybody that was trouble on the highway they were mine I had 20 questions to hand out to all my clients they took the quiz I decided whether I thought they were alcoholic or not they brought their sponsors in with them to show me how well they're doing and going to meetings and getting well and they should get a driver's license back not once did it occur to me that I would have flunked my own test didn't happen fortunately I had an Eskimo one of my clients had worked four years to get his driver's license back and he finally got it back and going out the door he and his sponsors say to me so have you ever been to a no of course not why would I go to A and they said well you'd be a much better employee if you went to three meetings that felt like a challenge you know so I said OK I'll go to three meetings I'd love to say the next three Saturday night speakers I was right there front and center it took me almost six months to get to 3 meetings because I would get off at 4:30 and the meeting started at 8 and I would stop at the bar and think and I'll get there and I would never get there finally these guys would pick me up and take me to dinner to make sure I would get to that meeting I still didn't think I had a problem I had no idea so I go to my first meeting and I'm not really paying attention I'm just there saying hello to clients I'm sure now when I look at it I'm sure they thought it was hysterical that I was at their meeting but I thought I was just being there you know I

go to the second meeting and there's this old codger there and he's going on and on and on and on and then he says you know you could be an alcoholic and not even realize it he's pointing at me I'm like well what does he know he said we have a 20 questions that anybody can take and I'm thinking

ohh I know those 20 questions he said I think everybody over the age of 20 should take that quiz at some point and see where they are with their alcohol after the meeting he came up to me and handed me the 20 questions I said ohh I'm quite familiar with it he said have you taken the questions said no he said take one home for yourself I took it home and I put it in my purse and ignored it you know I'm busy I'm working I got two kids I got a husband dead I go to go to the last of my 3 meanings finally which was months later that same guy is there he said did you take the quiz I had completely forgotten that he wanted a response I said no he said OK so I sat down and I listened and the third speaker was somebody who told my story told exactly how I felt how I was so empty inside how in spite of the fact of looking happily married with two kids in a house in the suburbs and I just wanted to die I couldn't live this way anymore drinking didn't help it made it go away I used to call it my vacation because I didn't expect it to fix anything all it did was just make it go away for a little while and then of course when you come to and it's worse and when that person told my story I was stunned because I never would have thought I was alcoholic but that person was and then if he was I had to think well maybe I should take the quiz so I went home and the next week I took the quiz but I wouldn't mark the score No Fear of being honest here so I take the quiz I leave it on top of the table I'm not going to mark it I don't care I took the quiz that's what he asked me to do and I went to a bar on a Saturday night it's like 2 in the morning and then you know it's a cops bar because that's what I did for a living this hang out with cops and so I'm at this bar and this guy's drinking ginger ale and orange juice at like 2:30 in the morning and he just looked at him and I said you know if you're drinking ginger and orange juice you don't belong here he said if you know that you probably don't belong here either and so he invited me out for breakfast to talk and I went I don't know why I went but I went five hours later he returned to Alcoholics Anonymous and I went to my first meeting I've never seen that person at any meeting ever again and I just think thank you OK so there so that was when I how I got to Alcoholics Anonymous but you know what I think about Alcoholics Anonymous and how much it's been in my life so much my husband and I had a course 1/3 sober baby because that's what a lot of people do when they're newly sober and so shortly thereafter he committed suicide successfully so now I have 3 kids 3 and under and I'm newly sober and Yikes honey people in AA just stepped up it was I had dated another one of my clients um and his girlfriend babysat my kids so that I could go to a meeting I really but that's what you guys did you did whatever it took to help me be successful I stayed sober but I didn't really believe I was alcoholic I really wasn't sure I couldn't find any of my family and I thought oh this is a family disease where are they I didn't think I was really alcoholic I thought I was like an Irish heavy social drinker you know without the social but I didn't believe it and so I stayed here I got a sponsor I worked steps I did everything I was supposed to do but I had that little reservation and I'm very fortunate that where I got sober they would call you on it and so almost every and I would talk about it in meetings that I wasn't sure and they would say well step up to your local bar and try some controlled drinking a good case of the jitters yada yada they did that for almost five years and when I when my husband had passed away I went to a therapist and she said Marita it can take up to five years to get settled into a new change this is a big new change for you to be a widow so I decided to give a five years too and so at four years 11 months and two weeks I don't know what I get mad at I have no idea but I thought today's a good day to find out if I'm really alcoholic

and so with just that kind of a flippant attitude I picked up a drink and didn't drink long about 3 1/2 weeks I went from a periodic drinker to an all day drinker and at the end of that 3 1/2 weeks I bought a gun and one bullet I still think about that man in that store who would be willing to sell me one bullet not a box you know there's still a lot of work we can do on CBC and it's not just doctors but it was fortunate that I also had the Home group that not only did they tell me I need to step out and try some drinking they also called me somebody from my Home group called me every day just to see how I was nobody said anything about me drinking it's just how are you how are the kids how's life with that fateful day they called and they said how are you and I said I don't think I'm so good I said I bought a gun I can't live like this anymore you said ohh and then they said the magic words do you think it could be your drinking I have to tell you that alcohol is so powerful in my life that within three weeks of returning to drinking I completely forgot that I wanted to see if I could drink socially that I was completely in the groups of alcoholism and I said ohh crap I think I am and so I went back to meetings it's not a big dramatic story for anybody else but me because it's mine I got active in my group and there was this little Hispanic man who used to say sit right here and so I would sit there because I was terrified of everybody anyway and so I would sit there and then one day I had about 8 months of sobriety and they were looking for an alternate GSR and Oscar turned out was the GSR he said that we have one I picked her out I you know oblivious and I listening and he says yeah Marita can do it I'm thinking really I said ohh I'd love to you know the automatic lie response I'm so polite ohh I would just love to but I have three children at home I don't have another person who can help me he said no no no my wife will watch your children we've already talked about it so this darling Hispanic man took me home to meet his wife who didn't speak English and she taught my children remedial Spanish and I joined general service so I went to my first meeting and it was an assembly and the most amazing thing was is they were talking about they were changing the book now I have finally decided I like a I'm going to stay in A and what do you mean you're changing our book I went rushing back to my Home group and said they're changing our book and they said what are you talking about they said so at the assembly and of course Oscars sitting there laughing at me basically but I said yeah they said they're going to change our big book and they said oh you better go keep an eye on them and let us know what's going on I went back to general service they were changing the stories from the second edition to the third edition but I didn't know enough to know that and as a side I just have to say then when I got to serve as a trustee on our board I had the opportunity to share the literature committee for the trustees literature committee while we worked on the 5th edition and I thought I hope there's somebody in some assembly out there that's going to change in our book we can kind of conflict whether there is any or not you know so I stayed in general service and I stayed in a I got remarried and the most amazing thing happened we got transferred to Saudi Arabia surprise and so my husband who had 10 years more sobriety than I did said well there's only one thing we have to check before I say yes and I said OK what's that he said I have to make sure they have meetings good plan you know it's that's the importance of marrying well you know they remember that stuff and so we went to New York we thought it was important to go to our general service office to say goodbye and see it before we left and pick up extra literature so we do all that and it turns out that this darling woman gave us a little tour and at the end she Pats me on the arm and she says now you keep in touch I thought she meant it literally every six months I wrote a report 19 people in a six are British two were German three Americans I'm sure she could have cared less but she kept in touch she sent me literature and she was my roommate at the International Convention this past year because that's how we make AA friends I love Susan but you know my sobriety is just my sobriety what is important is Alcoholics Anonymous that's the miracle to me not that I'm sober that's a miracle for me but it's Alcoholics Anonymous that's the miracle you know I wouldn't have

gotten sober except that somebody did CPC at some point and got those pamphlets into the office that I took over when I went to work for the Secretary of State's office I got to hand out 20 questions because somebody gave them to somebody in the DMV so that I could hand them out I got to Saudi Arabia with phone numbers in my hand because we had a general service office that collected phone numbers back then around the world of people who lived all over the world so we could find each other we got shipments of delivery of literature from

the office in Great Britain from Germany and the United States to make sure that we all could carry the message in the languages that we needed in our little group everywhere I have gone Alcoholics Anonymous has been there first I didn't have to do any of the hard work I just have to pass it on and keep it going so my husband and I we lived in eight States and four foreign countries it's really an embarrassment of stories but aim was in all of them a was already there waiting for us just scooped us up took us in and said yay we got another one when we moved to California we finally decided that we needed to like go ahead and pay back general service because we're always trying to pay back to a but channel service people made our life easy by being there first by providing the literature by carrying the message and so we joined our general service and you know I did the traditional route of almost everybody in the room I was a reluctant alternate GSR confused GSR and overwhelmed DCM I mean I you know we all do it I think DCM's the hardest job there is and Alcoholics Anonymous because you have to take people who aren't sure what their role is and explain to them people who know too much about their role and make it interesting enough that their group will care God bless our GCM's and DCMC's so we made a deal when we moved to California that we would never leave the region because we like to move a lot but we did manage to stay in one place for 15 years and so my husband Steve and I were able to go through general service in area 5 yes and so um it was a lot bigger back then so it was a lot bigger and so we went through general service and we I had the honor and the privilege of serving as a delegate and my husband served as a delegate and then we moved to Nevada and I thought I would sit in the back of the room and I actually if you met my husband Steve you would have said ohh he's going to be such a great trustee I mean everybody loved the way his heart worked and I really think the wife of a trustee is the best job in Alcoholics Anonymous you can do all the traveling and none of the work God had other plans I became a widow in my 40s Steve got sick one weekend and died the following weekend and I was surprised and so was he and so I have three children and my youngest has a lot of special needs and I thought OK I'm kind of done you know maybe I'll get to assemblies and maybe not but you know Colleen and I don't have a happy life because you guys gave me one and so that was in 2000 and I did I had a really happy life I sat in the back of the assembly of whichever area was in I mean I used to call myself the regional past delegate because I lived in five 93941 and thought about 8:00 because I was there twice a month for meetings and I thought you know that's who I am I'm the regional pass delegate I just I move a lot but I stay in the region and so I didn't I didn't put my name forward for anything I just stayed home and then I got remarried to a past trustee I missed the travel but he was just such an incredible man and he and I had known each other over 20 years I knew his wife you know my husband they had a standing joke about the car that my husband drove my husband cherished his Volvo that was all he ever drove were Volvos and Julian used to say, "look it's a Ford" because Ford bought Volvo and so they would have running jokes for years and so Julian and I got married and I moved back to Nevada I thought we would have a happy life and about 2 1/2 years in he got diagnosed with cancer and he said we're not telling nobody about this stuff and I thought ohh I understand how that works look at me on crutches on a cane I'm fine you want a wheelchair no I'm fine so I understood Julian my

beautiful son gave me a platter when Christmas and he said your plates too full you've got a special needs daughter you have a husband with cancer here new back in the state again I want to get something off your plate and took over the conservatorship of his sister you guys you taught me how to be the parent the creates a child who thinks like that I mean that's that was such an incredible awesome gift that he gave me so we did it and his he now lives he lives in Utah and his my daughter lives nearby him and he has six kids and so their house is always busy so she's

always busy and it's perfect it's so much better than living with your old mom you know so now Julian passes away and I'm just sitting here now I told you that Scott and Nancy and I were all delegates together in 1999 when the dinosaurs roamed the earth but Nancy knew my sponsor Jackie really well and Jackie had this way of just kind of putting her finger in your chest when she was talking to you in case you didn't get the message and Nancy called me one day and she said do you feel Nancy do you feel Jackie's finger in your chest like ohh Jackie died 20 years ago yeah no I don't feel that she said Are you sure Jackie used to always say when I was there I was appointed area secretary and after the 15 months I served I said I don't like podiums I don't even have to read names I'm happier in the back of the room I don't think this is for me and she went ohh it's only passed Trustees do ohh really you know we've already invested an awful lot of time and money in you we'll tell you when you're done we'll just vote no and so Nancy reminded me that you hadn't voted no and so I said OK and I looked and there was a trustee at large position that was open and the next year was going to be regional and I looked at it and I thought well it's been 20 years since I've been delegate nobody really knows who I am anymore and I thought ohh there's 89 candidates possibly for trustee at large where there's only 15 if it's a regional I'm going with the trustee at large because my odds of going home are so much better and so I put my name in for trusty a large I was supposed to get a dog and my friend said don't get the dog too after the conference and I'm like really come on and Wednesday of conference week Julie are then delegate from Nevada called me up and all the regional delegates yelled in the phone don't get the dog trustee at large travels I travelled every three to four weeks I was on the road somewhere there are 21 trustees sometimes 22 on our general service board there's one that's a trustee at large US and one that's the trustee at large Canada and they are the candidates that go and become our representative to the world's service meeting and they are also the people could get invited around the world to represent the Alcoholics of US and Canada sometimes it's because the structures new when they have questions on how should we do this and what about that sometimes it's to celebrate an anniversary of a country that they're so excited they want the mothership to send somebody to join them in their celebration And you guys gave me the opportunity to do that for four years I got to go to Cuba where they had the ministry of mental health come and recognize Alcoholics Anonymous after 22 years they said we've been watching that makes my heart scared every time I think of it we have been watching you for 22 years and we think that Alcoholics Anonymous is the only thing that gets people sober and returns them to be healthy and active family and community members I just think that's a credible testament to Alcoholics Anonymous I got to go to Mongolia for their 25th anniversary and what was really fun was I actually happened to have been in Mongolia 25 years beforehand their meeting was 3 1/2 weeks old when I went I went on business and I went to a meeting because that's what I do when I travel I go to meetings I want to find my family and so I had gone to this meeting and it was in a psychiatric hospital and you know it was kind of fumbly and it was in a foreign language and I didn't really care I was just happy to sit with my people so I got to go back for the 25th anniversary and there was the psychiatrist who started Alcoholics Anonymous in Mongolia and I have to tell

you the mongolians they are party people they sent buses all over the country to pick up all the Alcoholics that could come and they had hundreds and hundreds of people that all came some of them brought food some didn't bring food everybody got fed everybody took care of each other and just celebrated sobriety stunning and the reason why they have it in Mongolia is pure happenstance that psychiatrist got trained in Russia when we brought people brought the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to Russia and some instructor in the medical school told the students if you go I will give you extra credit and a psychiatrist student went and then the rest of his time in medical school he saw what happened to people who got sober he took that Russian big book home to Mongolia translated it and began a the friends of Alcoholics Anonymous are just incredible for us I just don't want to harm that relationship that we have with the world because it's

amazing what they do I think Henrietta Seiberling we wouldn't exist without another non alcoholic sister nation I can go on which is why we had to read doctor Jack Norris because another non alcoholic I can go on and on and on about the people I have met because you trusted me when I thought you were changing my book and yet here I stand at the full circle of that my Home group took care of me at my last conference they decided while I of course wasn't there that I should be elected treasurer of my Home group and so they elected me in absentia we have 42 meetings a week it's six different fellowships and they all put their money in the same box OK you know I've been in the general service a while I know that the GA the DNA the ACA all those they don't belong in the same box so I had to go around and visit all these different fellowships and explain I don't want all your money and they're like it's \$4.00 and I'm like Nope I get 2 you get 2 and as a result I had the opportunity to do workshops in my little town of Mesquite 20,000 people teaching art traditions to other fellowships and what that 7th tradition means about being fully self supporting how they have to contribute to their fellowships and I thought wow this is a big deal because those envelopes fill up quick and so that wasn't enough God sent me two brand new never been to a before newcomers I got sober in 1981 it's probably been 25 years since I've had a brand new newcomer I get people who move into town or somebody who sponsors passed away or what you know they've all been through the steps awhile I'm exhausted these gals have got me running I go to like 3 times more meetings than I was going to before they're at my house now we have a regular schedule where they're supposed to come but they're showing up all these other times too because they're having crises you know the joy that you have given me in my life is immeasurable people say how have you done with rotation I think it was easy the conference elected a woman whose fabulous probably going to be much better than I was at this last gig I had but I got to come home and sit in my chair in my Home group and hang out with my people I haven't been able to go to all the processes in the last four years and I missed the regional forum not this one but the one before I don't have any excuses anymore I am so excited to be back in the loving embrace of my region thank you.

Love you, Marita.

Thank you, for your service.

Ruthie B.