

Long-Timer:	Bob C.
Interviewed by:	Kevin Jr.
Sobriety Date:	8/18/1983
Interview Date:	7/17/2025
Introduction:	Bob C. recounts his journey from a steady Florida upbringing through years of escalating alcoholism, hospital detoxes, and failed attempts at sobriety, to a spiritual awakening in AA that transformed his life. With plain-spoken honesty, humility, and hard-earned wisdom, he reflects on his long path to recovery and decades of service in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Kevin Jr: Good afternoon. My name is Kevin Jr., and I'm a grateful alcoholic. Today I have the honor and privilege to interview Bob C. Good afternoon, Bob.

Bob C: Hey, Kevin.

Kevin Jr: If you could, just tell us a little bit about your life before AA. Where were you born and what was your childhood like?

Bob C: I was born in Leesburg, Florida, and grew up in Mount Dora, near Orlando. So, I'm a native Floridian. Grew up in a middle-class, working family. As far as I can tell, there's no alcoholism in my family—nothing on either side. Nobody drank. I went to school in Mount Dora, played high school sports, mainly football, and played in the band. We went to a Baptist church, and I was pretty active there. Four of us had a little music group that played for different church events. After school, when I wasn't doing sports, I'd help out in my dad's business to make a few bucks.

Kevin Jr: Sounds like a normal childhood.

Bob C: Yeah, nothing out of sorts that I can look back on.

Kevin Jr: When you were young, did you know what you wanted to be when you grew up?

Bob C: Honestly, I had no idea. One of my teachers told me I should be an engineer, and that's what I went with. My dad got sick and brought my uncle into the business, so that door kind of closed. Engineering it was.

Kevin Jr: Where did you go to school?

Bob C: Started at a junior college in Georgia and then ended up at the University of Florida. Got a degree in mechanical engineering, although I ended up practicing structural engineering.

Kevin Jr: When did you start drinking?

Bob C: Right after high school. I can't even remember what the drink was. A buddy of mine worked a couple of doors down from my dad's business, and one day he asked if I wanted a drink. I thought, "Sure, I'll try it." That's how it started. No idea what I was getting into.

Kevin Jr: Did you drink in college?

Bob C: Yeah, I drank through college, but it was kind of on and off. Nothing too wild. It made me feel a little freer, but it didn't really cause any problems back then. Once I got to UF though, well... that's a drinking school! I joined a fraternity, and ~~we~~ even won a chug-a-lug contest. Had a trophy and everything. Got married during my last year of school—my wife graduated a year before me. I was still drinking, but it wasn't out of control.

Kevin Jr: And after college?

Bob C: Started working. Traveled a lot, lived off an expense account. Life was good for a while—fancy dinners, top-shelf booze. But that lasted about 8 years. Then we moved to New Orleans, and that's when it all came apart.

Kevin Jr: What happened in New Orleans?

Bob C: I was working for a Jacksonville company. They sent me out there for a big project. I didn't want to go—didn't like the job or the city—but they insisted. My wife was pregnant with our second son, and that added to the stress. Started drinking heavily. Got some health problems, including liver issues. Doctor did a biopsy and said I could never drink again. I was 30. I tried to quit, asked the doctor for something to help. He said he could give me something to make me wish I hadn't drunk. Gave me Valium for the anxiety, which just meant I drank with pills now.

Kevin Jr: How bad did it get?

Bob C: My second son was born in New Orleans the day before Mardi Gras. Absolute chaos. I was drinking like crazy. After we brought him home, my wife asked if I wanted to call AA. I didn't know what AA was, but I said yes. Couple guys came over and 12 stepped me. They took me for a ride, drank Cokes, went to the bathroom a lot, and eventually took me to a meeting. That meeting was awful. One guy stuck a jigger with holes cut in it in my face and said, "This is all you can drink from now on," and laughed. I thought, "Screw you." That was my first impression of AA—terrible. That stuck with me for years.

Kevin Jr: But you kept coming back?

Bob C: In and out from 1978 to 1983. I have no idea how many times. I'd use the hospital for detox—there weren't many options back then. One day, the doctor told my wife, "Get that damn drunk out of here. I don't want him in my hospital anymore." So, I ended up at a

real detox in New Orleans. Didn't stay sober then either. I wasn't into drugs, but I did discover that a little pot would stop shakes and DT's. I thought the AMA needed to know about this wonderful discovery, so I started a letter to inform them. Don't think I ever sent it since I never got any recognition for my contribution.

Kevin Jr: What was different in 1983?

Bob C: That summer, we were out at Perdido Key. I hadn't been drinking for a while. I walked into a beach bar, saw those longnecks sweating in the cooler, and I knew—I'm going to detox. But I drank anyway. That kicked off a three- or four-week bender. I crashed the company car, ended up in the hospital, ran from the cops, hid in the middle of a bunch of Baptists getting out of church and got the preacher to take me home. My wife had taken the kids and gone back to her mother's. She just said she didn't want to see me die. I was completely out of control.

Eventually, a buddy found me passed out, broke in, and took me to detox. My employer said, "You may or may not have a job if you go, but you *definitely* don't have one if you don't." So I went. As soon as I got in, I wanted out. They said I had to wait 72 hours. A doctor finally came in and said, "You should be dead. Your blood alcohol is .41. You are going to die, so I'm letting you go." That took the fight out of me. When he said I could go, I realized I had no place to go, so in desperation, I stayed.

Kevin Jr: What was your sobriety date?

Bob C: August 18, 1983. That was the day I went into that detox.

Kevin Jr: What happened after that?

Bob C: Company brought me back to Jacksonville as neither my employer nor the client wanted me in Louisiana. We moved to Orange Park for the schools. There was one meeting a day in Orange Park—at a little place on Kingsley. That's where I got started.

Kevin Jr: Who was your sponsor?

Bob C: My first sponsor was a traveling salesman. He was only in town on weekends, so we'd talk Saturdays. I had to call his wife, she'd track him down at a motel. Sometimes I wouldn't hear back for days. But he helped me, and others did too. His wife was in the program, and she got me into service work. I'd call her, whine about my problems, and she'd say, "Tough shit. Go help a drunk." So I did.

Kevin Jr: What kind of service did you do?

Bob C: I started sponsoring early on. Got on the 12-step list. They'd call at 2 or 3 in the morning to pick someone up from a payphone and take them to detox. Did that a lot. If the

service center was full, we'd dump them at the ER. There weren't many options—Fourth Street Service Center was about it. I also started leading Big Book studies at a halfway house in town. They asked me to do three months—I stayed about 15 years.

Kevin Jr: That's a major commitment

Bob C: Yeah, it stuck. Three of us started the Sojourn Group in 1987. The Orange Park Group moved to Smith Street with the club, but we stayed independent. Met in a little shack out toward Middleburg. Eventually, the church built us a meeting room. We're still there today.

Kevin Jr: What else have you been involved in?

Bob C: After I got into church again—thanks to my wife tricking me with a softball league—I got more involved with Bible study. I ended up a deacon, then an ordained minister. Started taking church services into Clay County Jail in 1999 and I still do that. At some point, I had to give up the Big Book studies to keep my sanity, but I never left the work.

Today my wife and I have been married for 57 years and have a wonderful life. We have 2 great sons & daughters-in-law and 5 grandkids. Because of the program I have been blessed to officiate one of my son's and one of my granddaughter's weddings. God is amazing.

Kevin Jr: Do you still attend meetings?

Bob C: Oh yeah. Go to Coyote twice a week, Sojourn a few times, Sunday Anything is Possible meeting, and 7 AM Daily Reflections Zoom meeting several days a week.

Kevin Jr: What's changed since 1983?

Bob C: Lots more meetings. More treatment centers. That's changed the way people come in. We didn't have much when I came in—just hospitals and “shake and bake” detoxes. (We sweated and slept on rubber sheets and everything just shook. We shook till we didn't shake any more.) People today come in with more info, maybe more expectations. Some meetings have drifted away from singleness of purpose. That's fine if that's their group conscience, but I prefer helping alcoholics.

Kevin Jr: You still use your old Big Book?

Bob C: Yeah. Got it in detox. It's dog-eared, taped up, full of highlights. Still use it every week. I even cross-referenced it with the Bible (and this was before the internet so it was all manual) — I had the Big Book on one knee, the King James Bible on the other and I cross-referenced Bible verses all through it. According to Dr. Bob's story, the three things they used as the basis of the AA program were the Sermon on the Mount, the book of James,

and 13th Chapter, First Corinthians. So the Big Book led me to church. It's the one book I can still read and understand, even when I couldn't understand anything else.

Kevin Jr: That's incredible. Anything else you'd like to share?

Bob C: Nah, I think that's most of it. Except maybe this—I first heard about AA in 1970 during the International Convention in Miami. The newspaper was full of Alcoholics Anonymous. Didn't think much of it. When Bill Wilson died, I read it in the paper and thought, "What'll those poor people do now?"

Turns out, they did just fine—and got me too.