

Marty Mann's speech at the 25th Anniversary of High Watch

I'm sharing Wes's (Irvine) feeling of being really moved on this occasion. High Watch Farm has always meant a great deal to me. It's given me a lot, a lot more than I've ever given it, and I haven't been nearly as close to it in recent years as I would wish. To hear the kind of thing that Wes was saying about the exploits of the graduates, and to see this kind of a group gathered together to celebrate the 25th anniversary, I think tells its own story of what the farm has done and what it means to a great many people.

I want to start by telling you something I heard quite recently. I was in Kansas City two weeks ago and while I was there a friend of mine celebrated his 10th anniversary, and afterwards invited a lot of people to his home. A girl came over to me and said, "You're from the East, do you know anything, have you ever heard of High Watch Farm?" I said, "Yes, I have." She said, "Well, you know, we're all talking about it out here. One of our girls has come back from there, and she had the best quality AA that we've ever seen. I've been sober four or five years (I forgot which it was), but I want to go there and I am determined to go there next year. Can I go?" I said, "Yes, I think you could go, people do go there for vacation, too." Then she proceeded to go on and on and on about how wonderful this place must be because of what it had done for her friend in Kansas City. So you see, it isn't just in New York and Connecticut and around our own bailiwick that the farm has gained a wonderful reputation, but it's now spreading right across the country. I didn't realize that we were getting people from that far away, Wes. I think it's wonderful.

When I was thinking about what I would say tonight, it seemed to me that perhaps the thing that would come best at this time was a very simple description of how we, and I mean AA, found the farm, how we came in contact with it. Now, this involves a little bit of my own story and so I will begin there.

Many of you have heard my story, and I'm not going into all of it. I don't expect to cut too much into the time of the orchestra, and the dancing. Suffice it to say that at the end of five years of hell-on-earth—which I don't have to describe to very many people in this room—I had finally found a doctor who was willing to take me under his wing. He was the eighth that I had tried in a year. None of the others were willing to take me on.

They had all told me that I had better commit myself to a state institution. When I said, “For how long?” they wouldn’t tell me. So, they confirmed in my mind my own belief that I was insane and that it was the type of insanity for which there was no hope, and that once I walked in, and those gates clanged behind me, that would be it. So, I wasn’t very eager to do it.

But, the eighth man said he thought maybe he could help me. His name was Dr. Foster Kennedy, and he was a very famous neurologist and psychiatrist. I had been given an appointment with him as a Christmas present by a friend who was impressed by the fact that I was trying not to drink. I’d lasted six weeks, and that was quite a feat, I can tell you. This had impressed her sufficiently and I was so anxious to get some kind of help, and she rather agreed with me that I was nuts. She felt maybe this man could help - that he thought maybe I was that one. On the chance that I was that one he would take me on as a patient. I might mention here that I was broke, that was why my appointment was a Christmas present. It had something to do, I think, with the turndowns I’d received from the seven doctors I had seen during the previous year. But, he told me that he would get me into his ward in Bellevue, the neurological ward. He did not think I was insane, he said. He didn’t think I belonged in the psychiatric wing and he would put me in the neurological ward and he would see me there at least once a week and we would then see what happened. So, that’s where I went.

I spent seven months in Bellevue. During that time I never got out of course, they take your clothes away when you go in there, and there isn’t any way to get out—and so I was sober. I had a lot of minor ailments that they were taking care of. Actually, you get very good care in Bellevue, medical care, and every week, Dr. Kennedy would ask me how I felt about it, and did I think that I was ready to go out? I don’t know where I got the insight, I don’t know how I knew that much, but I knew enough to say, “No, I’m not.” I’d probably be alright as long as things went well, but if I hit any problems—and I’m bound to, broke, no job, really no where to go—I know I’ll drink.

I’d been incidentally, completely honest about my drinking with all the doctors. It just never occurred to me not to be, that made me think I was insane, so that’s what I was there for. This was in 1937 and I never once heard the word alcoholism mentioned by anybody. I didn’t know the word myself. I knew I drank too much. I’d certainly been

called a lot of unpleasant names by friends, other names than alcoholic. That's a nicer name, I may add, compared to the other ones.

So, I recognized that if I drank again I would be right back where I was, that it would be impossible, and I was afraid to go out. I kept insisting to Dr. Kennedy that this wasn't enough, that just being locked up in the hospital and physically cared for was not going to straighten out whatever it was that was wrong, and that I needed a psychiatrist. Now, he didn't practice as a psychiatrist, he practiced more as a neurologist. I was quite aware, in any case, that I wasn't likely to get that much of his time. He was a fifty dollar a half hour man. The time that he gave to Bellevue, of course, was free. This was a free gift, a contribution that he made. So I saw him down there, but I wasn't likely to become a private patient.

And yet, I had to have help from somewhere, and I finally convinced him. He found a young psychiatrist that was doing some research work at Bellevue who agreed to see me while I was there. I saw this young man, oh perhaps eight or ten times, during the course of which he came to agree with me that what I needed was long term psychiatric help, such as he could not give me. Nor could he see me on any real basis. He was seeing me when he had a chance. He reported this back to Dr. Kennedy, and Dr. Kennedy took enough interest in me to find a private sanitarium that would accept me as a patient. He found that place. It was called Blythewood, it was in Greenwich, and its medical director was named Dr. Harry Tiebout.

Dr. Tiebout came into New York once a week to interview people who were thinking of coming to Blythewood, or whose families wanted to put someone in Blythewood. He saw me to see whether they would take me. Remember, I was broke. I had to be taken on as a charity case. Now, many good private institutions take a few people for free. They don't tell anybody else, so you aren't pointed at or anything, you aren't made to feel one bit different from the ones who are paying two or three hundred dollars a week. I had known that this was so because I had tried to get in on that basis to Riggs Sanitarium up in Pittsfield, Massachusetts some time before—Stockbridge, Massachusetts—and had not been able to do it. Tiebout interviewed me to see whether he thought I was worth taking on on that basis. Obviously, if they were going to take

someone on for free they wanted it to be someone that they thought was worth helping. I was very fortunate in that he decided I was worthy and they accepted me.

I moved from Bellevue up to Blythewood. It was like going from hell to heaven because Blythewood was a very beautiful place in Greenwich, had five hundred acres. This was in June that I made the move. I'd been in Bellevue since January 2nd. It was just almost too good to be true.

When I got there, I found that in the house where I was were the common rooms and also the dining room. The dining room was not too big, and there were two sittings. They assigned me to the second sitting, and they said that I would be sitting with three women. I was introduced to those three women, and I had dinner with them. We began to talk and it turned out that one of them I had heard all about because just a few weeks before there had been a wonderful story in the newspaper—I had read it in my hospital bed in Bellevue—of this young woman from the South whose husband had brought her up to New York and put her in Doctor's Hospital. Although her clothes had been taken away from her she had escaped from the hospital at two o'clock in the morning in her nightgown and mink coat and disappeared. The papers were full of this disappearance. Three or four days later the story was that she had been found.

Well, here she was, she was in Blythewood. I was enthralled with this story. I thought this was a fascinating thing she'd done, so I asked her all about it. Naturally, she was an alcoholic—I don't have to tell you that, do I? What she had done when she got out of there, she hailed a cab. Her nightgown and her bathroom slippers didn't look too different from an evening dress, so the cab driver had taken her.

She was so clever, she had gone to the Martha Washington Hotel. Now, that is a beautiful old ladies home, respectable to a degree, and certainly nowhere that anyone would look for an escaped drunk. So, no one had found her. She'd managed quite nicely by having things sent up to her room, until finally she decided she wanted to go out—and also she'd been drinking for several days by then—so she began calling up the department stores where she had accounts and having clothes sent down. That's how they found her. So, her husband had picked her up and there she was in Blythewood. This was one of the three.

The second one I don't remember too much about. She was not an alcoholic; she was a manic-depressive, it so happened. The third one was kind of a mystery. She claimed that she was in simply because she was convalescing from a severe illness and she had come there for the rest. Now, she lived in old Greenwich, just a minute away. Her name was Nona Wyman. She was not terribly amused by Martha's story—I was.

Martha and I became very great friends. Nona was kind of on the periphery. She was there, I would say, about six weeks after I came. Then she went home, and she used to invite Martha and me for a swim. We would go over and have lunch with her and swim. As I say, she was a kind of a remote person. She didn't give very much. We couldn't quite make her out. We talked about it, and wondered. It seemed an odd thing to do, to go to a sanitarium of that type just to rest up from an illness, to be frank. We couldn't quite get it. But neither of us were suspicious.

And now we will skip. I was in Blythewood in all for fifteen months. It was about eight months after I had come there that Dr. Tiebout called me in one day and said that he had come across something; he'd been given a book to read. It was a manuscript, it wasn't a book. He thought that maybe this was what I needed. Because, I must say that during that seven or eight months I had on several occasions gotten very drunk indeed, right there.

It's always possible to get drinks, you know. You can't be locked up really where you can't get drinks. Men get them in jails, in prisons, people get them in sanitariums, and I managed to get liquor. Also, we weren't locked up behind bars. We were free to go into Greenwich or Cos Cob shopping. Occasionally I could go into New York to the dentist, or to go to the theater. I'd go in and come back, perfectly alright, half a dozen times, eight times. The ninth time I'd come back roaring drunk. I never intended to. Tiebout and I would dig and try to find out why I'd done this and it never seemed to make very much sense. Except looking back later, I could see that one thing I'd been doing was testing out how well I was doing.

You see, Harry Tiebout was the only psychiatrist in that institution who told his patients, the alcoholics, that they could never drink again. All of the other psychiatrists were teaching their patients how to drink again. Because, of course, if this was purely an underlying personality disorder, and you got treatment for that and the disorder got

straightened out, naturally, you'd drink the way you used to. Now, this is perfect logic. The only trouble is it doesn't work. But, I always figured I had the wrong doctor. Tiebout was the kind of guy [that] didn't like to drink much, you know. I just thought he was a sourpuss who didn't want anyone else to drink. Used to make me very angry. And particularly my friend Martha had a doctor who was teaching her how to drink. Several other patients that I knew well by that time, their doctors were teaching them how to drink, so why was I so unlucky as to get a doctor who said I couldn't drink?

So, naturally, I was trying it out to see how well I was doing. Was I arriving at the point where I could drink the way I used to, or wasn't I? I never was. But it had got to a pitch where Tiebout said to me frankly that if it happened again, there really wasn't much point in my staying there, because he felt he'd done all he could, and I had done all I could and if it wasn't working there wasn't any point.

Well, now here I was, this was my last hope. It was certainly something I had wanted desperately. And yet, I didn't stop drinking. I just took greater care not to get caught. This had been going on for a couple of months, and I hadn't got caught, when, as I said, Dr. Tiebout called me in and said that he had been reading this manuscript and he thought maybe this was something that would help me. He handed it to me and the title of it was Alcoholics Anonymous.

Many of you have heard me tell of what happened to me with that book. I think I will tell you again, because I think it has a relation to the farm and to its meaning for me and many others. When I started reading the book I was thrilled to death, because here, for the first time, I found out what was wrong. Even Tiebout didn't use the word alcoholism. That word just wasn't used in the 1930s—by anybody. So, here was a description. It had a name and I was very happy about that. I loved the word “alcoholism.” I never had the slightest trouble accepting it, or the word “alcoholic.” It said it was a disease. It gave a description of the disease that explained what people had been unable to explain. It said that it was an allergy of the body coupled with an obsession of the mind, and that nothing could be done to change whatever this was in the body that had gone wrong, or was always wrong, or whatever, which made it impossible for your body to take alcohol normally. But something could be done about the obsession

of the mind that drove you to drink—against your own will very often—when you didn't want to. This was a program to deal with the obsession of the mind.

Well, at least I could understand why it was that I couldn't go back to drinking the way I used to. Something had changed in my body, or maybe it was always there, and I would never be able to take alcohol normally. I accepted it.

The only trouble with this book was that no sooner had I found these wonderful things in it that I fell flat on my face over the word God. This I couldn't handle. I wanted no part of it. I'd outgrown that when I was seventeen. It was self-hypnotism, oh, a long list of things. Anyway, I was telling people all about it at every session. I would read enough of the book to have ammunition and I'd go and tear it apart to him.

Also, I didn't like the way the book was written. They didn't know how to write, those people, whoever they were. They sounded like real weirdoes to me. It just wasn't for me. It was too bad, but it just wasn't for me. All I got from Tiebout when I'd get through with this harangue was that "You just go back and read a bit more."

So, I dragged my feet, and I spent over a month, not even getting to the middle of the book. A little weensy bit at a time. Hating every step of it. Fighting every step of it.

Then something happened in my life that affected a member of my family. I felt that my being where I was, was the cause of it, I was responsible. There was nothing whatever that I could do about it. But nothing. It filled me with a kind of anger I had never felt before and I never have since, thank God, because I really saw red.

I was in my room. I had a little tiny room up on the third floor that had been an attic room in this house once. With a little window under the eaves. Apparently the book was open on my bed as I raged. You can imagine what I was thinking. I'm going out and get[ting] two bottles and I'm going to get drunker than I ever got, I'm going to tear this place apart and I'll show 'em. This is very typical of an alcoholic, as you all know. We are so smart that when we get angry at somebody else we pick up the biggest sledge hammer we can find and we beat our own brains in. Real intelligent we are.

While this was going on, my eye fell on this book that was open on the bed. I couldn't read—I didn't try, I wasn't looking to read—but there, in the middle of the page, something stood out. A line. As if it was in block letters. Black, and high, and sharp. It said simply, "We cannot live with anger." That did it. God know[s] why. What it was in

those words that acted like a battering ram to the last of my resistance, why those words did it, I have no idea. I only know that when I realized where I was I must have been on my knees beside the bed for quite a while, because there was a big wet spot on the bedspread from the tears. I had been praying. I knew. I knew not only that there was a God, but that God was there.

I had such a feeling of freedom. It's almost—it isn't possible to describe it. That was the sensation, that I was free. Utterly and completely free. So much so, that I knew I couldn't walk out of that little window under the eaves, up on the third floor, and keep right on walking. I knew it.

I started over towards that window, and a grain of sense said, "Stop, go tell Tiebout first. Maybe you're really nuts now." So, I rushed downstairs and beat on his door—his office was in that same house. When he opened the door, when he saw my face, he put his patient right out, took me in. He said, "What's happened?" I told him, and he questioned me closely. He said at the end, he said, "No, you're not insane." He said, "I think you've had a perfectly valid spiritual experience. Many people have had them. There's a book about it. Get William James's Varieties of Religious Experience and you'll see how many people have had things of this sort." He said, "It's a wonderful thing, hang on to it. Now, go on back upstairs and finish that book."

So, I did. Somebody had switched books. It was a brand new book up there. Never seen it before. It was the most wonderful book I'd ever read. Wonderfully written, I loved everything in it. I read it through at one gulp. When I finished I started and read it all over again. It was for me, that book.

So, I walked around on a cloud for quite a few weeks, postponing the evil day when I might have to meet some of the people who had written the book. This I didn't want to do. I'd always been scared of people, particularly meeting new people. I got away with this for almost a month, until finally one day Dr. Tiebout picked up the phone, called New York, and said, "She will be in tonight." It was meeting night, once a week in those days, in Bill and Lois's house in Brooklyn, and I went.

That was my introduction to AA. I hadn't been in that room ten minutes before I knew that this was where I belonged. That I had come home. That I had found my own people. I have never changed that feeling. I get it frequently, all over again, when I go to

a new country, for instance, or to a place where I hadn't been, and go into an AA meeting, or an AA club, and there's nobody there that I'd known before. In five minutes, you know how it is, you feel as if you've known them forever. I had that feeling immediately.

Dr. Tiebout wanted me to remain on at Blythewood, although I felt perfectly ready then to pick up and go my way. I was kind of a guinea pig. I think he wanted to see what would happen. So I stayed almost six months. Finally, in mid-September, I was due to go. This was 1939. I had attended my first meeting on April 13th.

Two days before I left the ambulance had screamed up, and a stretcher had been carried out. There was a girl in a straight-jacket on the stretcher. It was Nona Wyman. She had been brought back. Nona, of course, was an alcoholic. But, she wasn't giving in those earlier talks between Martha and me about our drinking exploits. She just never told anybody anything. I didn't get to see her because she was not seeable those two days.

She was a patient of another doctor. She was a patient of one of the doctors who taught his patients how to drink. I came back to Blythewood nearly every weekend for many months. I attempted to see Nona for two or three weeks running. Her psychiatrist did not want me to talk to her about AA. He didn't believe in it. He didn't know what it was that had happened to me, but apparently he didn't like it, or he didn't think it would last, or something. I was very distressed about this, but I wasn't getting anywhere, there wasn't much I could do.

One day in New York I had a telegram from her psychiatrist saying that she had run away, that she was apparently holed up in, I forget whether it was, not the Lexington Hotel, but the hotel on Lexington Avenue, and would I do what I could, would I go and see her. She was really in a bad way. She was terribly drunk, she was suicidal. It wasn't possible really to talk to her.

We had a member in those early days who was a doctor, and I called him because she was really beyond my handling. And he came over and gave her a shot to quiet her and said he would try to get a nurse for the night if I would relieve the nurse at eight in the morning. He thought he could get one for the night, he didn't think he could get them around the clock.

He did get a nurse for the night, I did relieve her at eight in the morning, and Nona woke up more or less in her right mind and I started talking AA. Of course I had the book with me. And I started reading it out loud to her. She was receptive, she was willing to listen.

As we talked, and I read—this went on all morning long—she started telling me about a farm. She said that one reason she hadn't felt that she could talk about this, or even that there was much needed to be done about it, was that she had found a part answer, that she and her husband both drank too much, but they had a friend who had suggested some three or four years before, that they go up to a place in Connecticut where this friend thought they might find some help.

They had started going up to this farm near Kent, which was run by a very strange little old lady who called herself Sister Francis, who was a deeply spiritual person. The farm was run on spiritual lines. She said, "You know, I believe that this AA that you're telling me about is exactly what she's trying to do. I think she'd be very excited about this, because Walter and I are not the only people like us who have gone to that farm. The interesting thing was that I never wanted a drink while I was up there. I never drank while I was at the farm. But I wouldn't be home very long before I'd start again." Walter, who came up for weekends, (she'd stay up the whole summer) never drank while he was up there either, no matter what condition he arrived in. Or for his vacation that he spent up there. She said, "It does something strange to you, I don't know what it is, it's wonderful. But of course we can't live there all the time, so there has to be something that will work when we're not there. But it has something, that place. I know that Sister Francis would believe in what you're telling me, because this is the kind of thing she's trying to do. You've got to come and see it."

Well, to collapse things a little bit, Nona and Walter had already separated and their affairs were in the hands of a lawyer. They'd started proceedings for divorce and she decided after four or five days that she would see Walter personally instead of just through the lawyer. She did, and she was sober and he was so startled he wanted to know how she'd done it. She told him about AA and he joined too.

A few weeks later the two of them succeeded in getting some of us to go up and see this remarkable place. It was a beautiful weekend at the end of October. We drove

up—it was Bill and Lois, and Horace Crystal and Bert Taylor and myself, with the wives. All of you know what it's like as you come up to the top of the hill and suddenly there is that adorable little house, with just a smallish barn across from it in those days. And we were all much struck by it, and I think you all know how beautiful it is in October.

It was a lovely day. But as we got out of the car and walked up to the house, Bill was right behind me. We stepped over the threshold, and Bill turned to me and he said, "My God, you could cut it with a knife." And I said, "Yes, you could." The atmosphere, the feeling. There was something there, something that was really palpable that you could feel, and every one of us felt it. To say that we fell in love with it is not to use the right terminology at all. We were engulfed.

That was one of the most wonderful weekends I have ever spent. We walked through the woods; we saw all the little cabins. We had a roaring fire in the fireplace; we talked far into the night with this extraordinary woman called Sister Francis, who was a very lovely person. With a wonderful sense of humor, incidentally. She called us all sister and brother, every one of us. She did this because she had such a bad memory for names, and it solved the problem—she called everybody sister or brother. And the reason she called herself Sister Francis was because Saint Francis of Assisi was her favorite Saint, and she also had a great feeling for animals. That's why she was a vegetarian and would never wear any animal skin, she only wore canvas shoes. She didn't wear anything that had ever come from an animal, nor did she ever eat any meat or flesh. And she had adopted Saint Francis's name. Her real name was Ethelred Folsom. I'm not surprised she took Francis!

Before that weekend was over, and I think I'm making it clear as I intended to do that Wes and others have given me far too much credit. I was merely an instrument, I was a bridge. I was a bridge because I tried to help an alcoholic, named Nona. The farm was a direct result of something we all do that we call twelfth step work. For which no individual deserves any credit, in my opinion. And what is at the farm was already at the farm before we ever found it. It found us, in my opinion.

The story of that farm, as I had it from Sister Francis, is pretty fascinating. She had gone on a spiritual search, oh thirty, forty years before. Not finding what she wanted in her own orthodox church, she had become interested in the study of metaphysics. She

had gone and studied with a woman named Emma Curtis Hopkins, who had been a teacher of metaphysics at the same time as Mary Baker Eddy, but lived longer than Mary Baker Eddy. And, who had gone in a different direction from Christian Science although there were many basic things that were similar.

Sister Francis had lived in Boston for several years, studying with Emma Curtis Hopkins, and had adopted this philosophy as her belief and her way of life. She had felt that she wanted to do something concrete about it, that this was something the world needed, that people needed. And, she had some money.

She set out looking for a place. Apparently she searched for a long while, until one day she found this, it's really a cup in the hills. There were three farms in this cup and she bought all three of them. Her original idea was that one of them would be for older people who could retire there and devote themselves to spiritual studies. One would be for children who were to be brought up in this way of thinking, without fear, and in love, and I'm quoting from Sister Francis. The middle one, this was to be the come and go one. This was the place for people who were in trouble—of any kind—whether it was physical trouble, or mental trouble, or spiritual trouble, material trouble. That they could come up there and stay as long as they liked. The idea being that they could try to find themselves, and if they did, they would go away refreshed, and able to once again to cope with life.

Well, Sister Francis was a true idealist; she lived up to her ideals. There was no money involved in this. There was a basket that hung on the door, and people who came were expected to put in the basket whatever they wanted to. So, it wasn't too long before she lost two of the three farms. Not enough money was in the basket. She herself had put most of what she had into the initial purchase. But the middle farm, the one that was the in-and-out farm, is the one that remained, and is the one that today we call High Watch. She called it Joy Farm.

She had incorporated for tax purposes and other reasons, because of the things that she did there was to print and distribute the writings of Emma Curtis Hopkins. In the wings of the house, down in the lower part, there was a printing press and enormous stocks of literature when I first went up there. They were mailed out from there, pamphlets all over the world.

People came there from all over the world. There was an English woman living there, at that time there was a Russian woman, there were several Indians that were there on and off during the first couple of years. The farm was known all over the world, and people came there.

But, the first thing that really happened to Sister Francis when she met AA was that she fell in love with AA. This, she felt, was putting into practice what she believed in. She felt that those of us who she met were living the way she believed. And we, God knows, appreciated what was there. We all made use of the little chapel. We all went in there for our quiet time, and before the end of the weekend she'd offered it to us, lock, stock, and barrel. She said, "Take it." She said, "We're incorporated as a non-profit corporation, The Ministry of the High Watch (that's where that name came from). There are two or three board members whom I know would agree with me entirely that you people can use this place the way it ought to be used. Take it."

Bill said, "No, we can't take it. AA doesn't own any property and doesn't want to. We can use it, but we won't take it." And that's how it was. Now Walter Wyman had already gone on the Board, at her request, even before he joined AA and sobered up, because after all, remember, she saw him sober when he was up there, and he was a very nice man, very fine man. She then asked if someone of us would go on the Board, and I was tapped for it, so I went on the Board.

We began making use of the farm. When I say making use of it, what I mean is that we would take somebody up there, for a week or two weeks, usually stay with them. Many of us, in those early days of '39, '40, '41, '42, didn't have jobs. We were free to do this kind of thing. There wasn't any money involved unless we wanted to put it down and we began making payments when we stayed up there, as much as we could.

Sister Francis lived there all the time, at that point. So did this English woman, and so did the Russian woman, in the first year. I went up there so frequently; I was working like a beaver to get some women into AA and not having very much luck. I was always taking someone up there. So I saw a great deal of it.

The following summer—by that time I had a job—I spent my vacation up there. There was a little cabin that became, in effect, mine, the one I always used and stayed in. Unfortunately it burned down one winter, somebody got the stove too hot and went out

for a walk and it burned down. But, it was a real home for me; it was for most of us. We loved it.

For several years, we didn't think about doing anything more than simply taking people up there. It was the atmosphere that we took them for. First place, it got them away from the drinking situation and their own situation, what ever it was. In the second place, there isn't any question there was something healing just about being there.

It was during that time, several years after that, I think, that my mother came east. We were supporting my mother, and I didn't have very much money, and neither did my sisters or brothers, and mother went up and she ran the farm for about a year. Then I was up there a great deal, and saw a lot of it. Incidentally, it was open the year round in those days.

Before my mother came east there was one other very personal connection I had with it. I've never hidden the fact that I had three slips after I came into AA. The first and the third were both over the holidays, Christmas and New Year's. The other one was in the middle, in the summer. Three within one year. It was my first year and a half.

The third slip that I had, I started to drink, and I called for help. It was the day before New Year's, and a friend drove me to the farm. The snow was about six feet deep. You couldn't come in from the Kent side, we came in the back road and got stuck in the snow and had to walk the last mile and a half, and I was like this [unknown gesture and laughter]. So I know what the farm means to someone who needs it, because I needed it and I found there what I needed. So I've had that experience with it too. These are some of the reasons why I feel so close to it, and why I am so deeply moved by this event here.

Gradually, Sister Francis was getting older, and didn't feel that she wanted to be there all the time, and felt that someone from AA who knew how to deal with these people ought to be there. We began trying to find somebody who would manage it. It was during this period that I was Vice President of the Board. Sister Francis was President, but she wouldn't act, so I had to act as President. Ed Hare tells me that he has been looking through some of those early records and it was "Marty Mann did this", "Marty Mann did that"—well, she had to! There wasn't much choice. We hadn't been able to get too much interest in doing any work about it.

But little by little, people became more interested in it, particularly as people came away from there and stayed sober. Dating way back from the period of my mother—sitting right down in front of me is Mary Hemp. There are a number of people here that were early High Watch graduates, before it was even thought of to do the work on the basis that is being done now. But gradually, little by little, it was transformed into truly an AA place. Now, you know that AA as such doesn't own it. But in effect, today, AA runs it.

There's something I very much want to say. As a Board member, I served during a number of years when we were having difficulty finding the right person to run the farm. Long after I went off the Board the difficulties persisted. It was not easy to find the right person, and sometimes we had someone who was the right person but didn't want to go on doing it, and it was somewhat of a problem. But from all that I hear, and from all that I've seen when I've been up there, that problem has been ended ever since the Irvine's moved to the farm. So this makes me particularly happy, that after twenty-five years here is a going concern, doing a tremendous amount of good, being used to its fullest potential. I think anyone who has been there knows what I'm talking about when I talk about the atmosphere, and I know one thing, I know that Kay and Wes know exactly what I'm talking about and that they have been able to use that to see that people coming up there had the chance to feel it and appreciate it.

It's a very great gift that was given to us, I think. I know of no one who was happier at the way that gift was being used than Sister Francis herself. Her only unhappiness was when she was in a place that was too far away for her to get to the farm as often as she wanted to in her last few years. Many of us who have known it and loved it will always feel that it's ours too. I suspect that anyone that's been up there gets that feeling. You can't help feeling a little proprietary about it. It enters your heart in such a way that it does become a part of you. It is a great healing force. It is a very wonderful thing that has been made available to us.

I have visited a great many places that have indeed sprung up in its image and others that sprang up not knowing anything about it. Many of them are very good, and many of them are doing a good job, and helping a lot of people. But I have never been anywhere in the world that has the thing I'm talking about that exists at the farm. It's a

feeble word, *atmosphere*. I don't quite know how to describe it. There is something in the air; God has his finger on it, thank God.