

# RRP 113 — Kathryn L. / Is It Odd or Is It God?: Recovery, Spirituality, and the Long Road to Portland

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**Presenters:** Julie P. Lewis and Peter B. Dowell **Episode Length:** Approximately 1 hour 47 minutes

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Kathryn L. grew up south of Boston in a home where alcohol was always present — a stocked liquor cabinet, homemade sambuca, and big parties that normalized drinking from an early age. By the time she hit her corporate career, she was a blackout drinker trying and failing to control something that was already controlling her. The death of her mother at 25, a tumultuous marriage, and a string of relationships driven more by loneliness than love — none of it stopped the drinking. What finally did was waking up on the bathroom floor on July 29, 2011, physically sick, emotionally sick, and spiritually sick.

What followed was a decade-long journey through AA in Boston — the AWOL women's group, a home group of 200 people in Braintree, and a sponsor named Rita whose son had just died from the disease. Then a career pivot from six-figure sales work to cutting fruit at a deli. Then, in March 2022, an 11-day cross-country drive from Boston to Portland. Halfway across the country, she realized she had everything.

Now coming up on 15 years sober, Kathryn lives by one question: is it odd, or is it God?

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## Key Points

- **[00:04:00]** Sobriety date: July 29, 2011. Kathryn says she never wants to forget waking up on that bathroom floor — physically, emotionally, and spiritually sick.
- **[00:10:00]** Growing up south of Boston: homemade sambuca, a stocked liquor cabinet, and a culture where drinking was woven into everyday life from childhood.
- **[00:16:00]** Her mother died suddenly when Kathryn was 25. A father who told her a week later: "Everybody's mother dies. Get over it."
- **[00:21:00]** First attempt at AA in 2008 — nine months in, she drank again. Three more years of "drinking like it was my job" before July 29, 2011.
- **[00:25:00]** Her therapist's advice: "Go find a women's meeting." Kathryn calls it the best advice she ever received.
- **[00:27:00]** The AWOL program — 26 weeks through the steps with 60 women in a church basement in Quincy, MA.
- **[00:29:00]** Sponsor Rita: her son had just died from alcoholism. She taught Katherine: "This is a disease that tells us we don't have a disease."
- **[00:37:00]** Sobriety built public-speaking skills that carried Kathryn from the rooms of AA to presenting a textile recycling program across 100+ Massachusetts school districts.

- **[00:42:00]** December 18, 2018: a car accident, a letter from her boss, and a decision to walk away. Rita's direction: "You're going to make AA your job."
  - **[00:50:00]** The cross-country drive: 11 days, planned around AA meetings, a stop in Akron. Halfway across: "I had nothing per se, like my life in the back of my car, but I had everything."
  - **[00:55:00]** A pancake breakfast in Troutdale connects her with Brad — her Portland sponsor — who called the next day.
  - **[01:09:00]** Her daily practice: all 12 steps before leaving the house, every morning, for nearly 15 years.
  - **[01:35:00]** FROG — Forever Rely On God — and the screen printing shop whose owner turned out to be in the program.
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## Websites Discussed

- Sweet and Salty PDX Cookies: <https://www.sweetandsaltypdx.com>
  - 4D Recovery: <https://4drecovery.org>
  - Real Recovery Podcast: <https://www.realrecoverypodcast.com>
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*"I never want to forget what it was like waking up on the bathroom floor, physically sick, emotionally sick, and spiritually sick." — Kathryn L.*

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