

**Interview with David Bouthiette  
[at AMHI 3 times]**

**September 4, 2003**

*Interviewer: Karen Evans*

**KE: What we are going to talk about first are your experiences while you were at AMHI, and then we will go on to what's happening today.**

DB: Okay.

**KE: My first question to you is why did you go to AMHI?**

DB: Because I got very sick. I was seeing things. I was hearing things, and I had a nervous breakdown and they ended up putting me there and I was there 6 months.

**KE: What do you think about AMHI? What memories come to your mind?**

DB: Scary memories – you know - people walking the halls at night doing dangerous things and, and keeping people awake with crying and talking and out of their mind. It was really a scary place.

**KE: When you were there, how long you were there? How many times were you there? Were you there just once, or if more than one time, what kind of changes did you see happen over time?**

DB: I was there 3 times and each time it seems to get a little bit better. The staff had a little more training. Food was a lot better. Walls were a lot cleaner and you were not you were not seeing so many people in one unit.

**KE: What was life like at AMHI for you? What was the typical day?**

DB: I would get up in the morning. Do bathing, showering and shaving. I would do basic stuff. I would get up and either walk the halls all day or we could do a little reading or watch a little TV, eat, take my medication and play cards.

**KE: And were there other activities that you did while you were there?**

DB: Yeah. I worked in the sheltered workshop while I was there until I quit it and came back to the ward.

**KE: And what did you do in the sheltered workshop?**

DB: I sorted paper.

**KE: Were there people at AMHI who affected you in a positive way and also in a negative way? What do you remember?**

DB: There was a staff member there who affected me in a positive way. It was really funny. She was giving me my medications, and I was having a rough time there...and she was the only one who could bring me down....

**KE: Do you remember her name?**

DB: Yeah. It was Jenny Linden.

**KE: I think I heard her name in another interview that I did. There was positive stuff. Who were the most important people while you were at AMHI and who helped you the most? Now you talked about that in regards to your relationship with your peers, were there any peers that stand out or was your relationship mainly with staff?**

DB: It was mainly with staff. There was a head nurse that was on duty at night who was a big help to me. His name was Reggie. He was really, really good. When my nurse was assigned to me, I didn't get along with her. Reggie was on my side...He would tell her that she was out of line. He was really good to me.

**KE: What was the culture of AMHI? Were there relationships among the people there? Your relationship was with staff. Was there was extensive community? Did you perceive that?**

DB: No, I did not.

**KE: What treatment did you receive and what activities were you involved with? What helped and what didn't? Please talk about the treatment. Let's start with that, what types of treatment did you receive?**

DB: I would see the psychiatrist once or twice a week. They had me on some very heavy medication...I was really bad shape. I wasn't allowed to go off the ward unless escorted by somebody...

**KE: Your treatment plan was only a therapist? They didn't have anything else for a treatment plan for you? No groups or anything like that? How did AMHI send you messages with regards to your relationship with your family, your community when you went up there? Did you still have input from family members or from friends?**

DB: No, I was never very close to my family to begin with. They really backed away from me once I went into there because there was a stigma there with my mother and father. Even though having my family qualified to be there, they didn't want to deal with the stigma.

**KE: How about friends?**

DB: I had friends who would come and visit who had special permission to take me out. I had support. I had...letters while I was there, phone calls.

**KE: Now we are going to talk about when you left AMHI, what happened.**

DB: When I left them, I came home, back to Portland. I was okay for maybe a couple of months and then I got sick again and back up to the local hospitals. They kept me here for 3 weeks and I wasn't getting better, I was getting worse, so they sent me back up to AMHI, and that was repeated at least a couple of times.

**KE: What were the changes? You said there were changes between the first time and last time? Can you spell out some of those changes for us?**

DB: Sure. When I got out the first time, they had me heavily medicated and I wasn't functioning good and I wasn't able to function in society. The second time – the last time I got out—I had less medication and I was able to function in society and they directed me to an institute that helped me...

**KE: We are going now into the experience and thoughts about where you are today. I want to start by asking how are you doing and what are you doing? So what are you doing with your life today that's different then what happened at AMHI?**

DB: Today I am doing good. I had about 3 classes a week and what I am doing differently today is when I do have bad day, I am able to pull myself out of it. This last time it took me a week to get out of this last bout, but I had a lot of support from people who would call me—from the therapist and the case manger to other people in my life and they helped talk me through it and I was able to make it through. What am I doing today? I am very active in the community. I sit on a couple of boards of agencies...

**KE: Would you like to talk about those?**

DB: Sure. I sit on Board of Directors of ...Coalition. I am also chairman of the Finance Committee. I was just appointed to...a panel dealing with substance abuse. I will be serving on that. I work at ...Computer... I was just hired by... My life has turned around 900 degrees.

**KE: Thank you. That's something to be proud of. In what way are you connected with your family today, and if you are, what way are you connected with your friends?**

DB: My friends I am closer to than my family. I have a brother who was here last Saturday that I haven't seen in like 40 years. He was here Saturday. I am not close to my family but I am in constant contact with friends...

**KE: And like you said before, you are very involved with your community by listing the kinds of jobs you are doing and your responsible you have. Have you experienced discrimination or stigma? If yes, please explain it.**

DB: Yes, I have...I am also a speaker for the United Way when you go out to where you give money for their campaign every year, and I always go and speak...I remember my very first beginning engagement, I got up and did my opening statement where I was diagnosed with mental illness and you could see the people out there grabbing the tables. Oh my god, this man is going to kill us. You know, and I said at that time I had a smile on my face and I don't have two heads, you know, and that got everyone laughing and it's gotten easier as I go on. Now when I say I have mental illness... nobody bats an eye.

**KE: What does recovery mean to you, and what has been most important to your recovery process?**

DB: I am going to take the second part first, what been most important in my recovery process is that I have taken care of my recovery. I used to allow...[others] to tell me what to do and how I was to do it...It's like now, I tell them. I say, no, this is the way I'm going to do it. I am not taking this...if it does work. It doesn't mean I'll go off. I will try it, [and] if it doesn't work, I am not taking it...

**KE: Any what does recovery mean to you?**

DB: Recovery means to me that I am able to function in society. That I am able to think today, you know. For a long time I was lost and, you know, I have been able to think, and I think recovery for me means being a productive part of society.

KE: Has spirituality played any role in your recovery? What has been your greatest challenge and your greatest obstacle in recovery?

DB: Spirituality has been a very big part of my recovery. I pray every morning to a high power, what you call God, every morning. I haven't got to the point where I go...at night. Yeah, but I do pray every morning and ask for help...

**KE: What is your greatest challenge and your greatest obstacle?**

DB: Challenge? My greatest challenge in what?

**KE: In your recovery process.**

DB: Maintaining my recovery...a big challenge for me. I'm doomed, I know, so I have to choose which one to go with. When I am working on one, there one goes, and when I am working the other one goes, I have to find a balance. That's a big challenge for me.

**KE: How have your hopes and goals changed since you spent time at AMHI? Look at what your hopes and goals and dreams were when you went to AMHI maybe for the first time and today relate that and where your hopes and dreams are different from them.**

DB: I think that when I went to AMHI the first time I ever went to a hospital...I just wanted to die, and I didn't have any goals, you know. Today I have hopes and dreams really. I care and am

devoted and willing to work myself toward these goals, and you know I am doing that...and I hope I can contribute to society...

**KE: As you know, we have a new psychiatric center that is being built up in Augusta, and it's called River View Psychiatric Center. What are your hopes, or what advice would you have to give us for the new treatment center?**

DB: That's tough...I would like the staff better trained, you know. I got the opinion when I was in there for the first time the staff were "baby sitters." ...

**KE: Do you have anything else to say to us?**

DB: No.

**KE: Okay. I thank you for this interview.**