

Gambling is an 'Addiction,' Said Last Week's Speaker



Myra Mabray

Myra Mabray from Counseling and Training Services, told us last week that gambling is treated like alcoholism or any other addiction.

People are lonely and bored today, and gambling appears to offer "power and control" she said.

"Gambling" may be offered as a way to support charity or schools. But "internet gambling is huge," she said, and people who become addicted "think about it all the time."

When they get in car, the dashboard reminds them of Roulette or Blackjack. Looking out the window at an apartment building may remind them of slot machines, she stated.

Ms. Mabray is one of a "team" of 11 persons, who are "licensed mental health people" who are "all trained" to confront gambling, she said.

People have "very little chance" of winning \$150,000 or \$200,000. But people who think they need power and control feel they can get it by gambling.

So they end up losing control over their lives and jobs and selling their possessions so they can gamble, she said.

Ms. Mabray listed six types of gamblers. Everyone wants to be a "professional gambler," she noted. There are also anti-social types, "casual social" types, "serious social types," the "relief/escape" gambler, and the pathological gambler. The "control" is less with each type.

She spoke of the "Alpha Gambler," who has "lots of friends," is usually a male, seeks action, skill and strategy, and competition. He is "ego driven" but fun to be around.

The "Beta Gambler" is usually a woman, and usually gambles to "escape" from her everyday life. Se usually avoids competition and conflict, and is usually alone.

People who are not able to keep gambling under control let it affect their occupations, their social life, the psychological area of their life, the educational and spiritual areas, and "all areas of their life," she said.

These people borrow money from friends and relatives. They start to sell their possessions, or other people's possessions. They may have legal or financial problems, or even lose a job.

Sometimes a home is gone, before a spouse discovers how serious an addiction gambling is.

Pathological gambling can become a person's purpose, their life, their god, and can end in bankruptcy or even suicide.

"Responsible gambling" involves social gambling, occasional gambling. A responsible gambler has limits,

and can "take it or leave it," she said.

Her organization has training services as well as counseling. Her number is (918) 424-1661.

'Doctor Thurman' Tells About Col. William Busby



Thurman Shuller

Thurman Shuller, one of the Centennial Speakers, told us Oct. 9 about Col. William Busby and his early-day promotions of McAlester, mainly the Busby Hotel (now the County Courthouse), and the Busby Theater.

Along the way he promoted the first Masonic Temple in McAlester, the streetcar system, a library, and dozens of projects that he came in contact with.

The "Colonel" had no military rank and no formal education. He came from New Jersey, by way of Kansas, where he started his

career with a gentleman in the grain and coal business.

When he came to Indian Territory just before the turn of the century, he was general sales agent for coal, in the Choctaw Coal and Railway Company.

The Sovereign Grand Inspector General of this "valley" of Masonry made him his deputy, and gave him the authority to plan construction of a \$100,000 building for the Masons. It turned into a \$200,000 building, and created the interest for building the organization and collecting the money for a later \$1,000,000 Masonic Temple, which stands today.

One day Busby was trying to make a phone call, and had a lot of technical trouble. "He bought the phone company and put in a new switch board, and sold it," Thurman related.

"He just wanted a phone that would work."

The subject of an Opera House first came up, according to the news articles Thurman has read, at a meeting after an Elks Club Christmas Party.

Thurman called it a "bull session," but whatever it was, Busby expressed his ideas of how a "theater" would help McAlester.

Busby outlined a plan to raise \$12,500 for the theater, but the fund-raising was not very successful. Busby put Gus Gill in charge and he raised \$11,000. However, Busby decided to proceed with his plans, saying he would use his own money.

The structure was built in 1907, the year of statehood, and opened March 13, 1908.

This was 100 years ago, and Thurman called this time "The Glory Years" of McAlester.

The train service, the hotel and the theater all went hand-in hand, as Busby's dream came true of bringing these events and personalities to McAlester.

The top opera singers of the day, the stage shows, the entertainers, all straight from New York.

"Peter Pan flew across the stage, just as she did in New York," Thurman stated. Ben Hur and its four white horses,

running at full speed, was performed And the trains brought 500 persons into the new city, to see that production.

Lillian Russell, Al Jolson, and all the top entertainers of that time came to stay at the Busby Hotel and perform at the Busby Theater.

The hotel was clean, the people were friendly, and the performers ranked McAlester high on their list of places to perform. The ladies wore their elbow length gloves and area residents dressed up for dinner at the hotel and to spend the evening at the theater. The theater was the fanciest and the waiters at the hotel dining room wore tuxes with "tails."

And special trains brought more people to use the hotel and the theater.

Meanwhile, Andrew Carnegie was building his libraries across the country. Busby contacted him and asked for a bigger and better library for McAlester.

He got on the board of the streetcar company, bought several new cars and a new generator.

All this lasted until 1913, when Busby died of a carbuncle on his neck, related the speaker.

The schools closed, and 2,000 people were at the funeral.

E.C. Million was named executor of the estate.

Then they found there was a \$20,000 mortgage on the theater, and a \$50,000 mortgage on the hotel. Which meant, Thurman said, that Colonel Busby had spent all his money on promoting McAlester.

A "sheriff's sale" was held to pay the taxes. The St. Louis banker who held the mortgages was the only bidder.

He bought both of the buildings.

Living in McAlester "must have been mighty good 100 years ago," Shuller concluded.

Area Historian Tells Back-ground Of ‘Prison Tales’



Steve Adams

Steve Adams, area historian and Centennial speaker, told us last week the details of several old time stories and tales he has found over the years.

Several of the stories concerned the prison, where he worked for 25 years. One was that McAlester at one time had a choice between being home to a college or a prison.

Although the story has been denied by several political figures, Adams says he has seen proof that McAlester once had a choice of the two different types of institutions, and it chose a prison.

Adams also told about the (1973*) prison riot in which many of the buildings were burned and there were stories of a number of killings of mainly inmates. Adams said during a district court hearing here, a judge told witnesses not to bring up the stories about the killings by the inmates.

However, local law enforcement and prison officials knew about them, Adams said following his presentation.

Adams told what he read (and heard*) about the first prison break in 1914. He said it was in January, about 4:30 in the afternoon, when a prison work crew was coming in, after working all day.

Three inmates had a forged requisition to see Parole Officer Frank Rice. They were China Reed, Tom Lane and Charles Kountz.

They were in Rice's office when several prison officials rushed in to tell about the attempted prison break, Adams related. A Judge Thomas who was there seeing his inmate client, was shot. H.H. Glover was shot and F.C. Godfrey tried to grab the inmates' gun and was shot in the head. Deputy Warden Oates had a shotgun and pointed it at the inmates.

An inmate shot him between the eyes, Adams said.

The three inmates had a buckboard wagon outside and took the secretary, Mary Foster, to attempt their escape.

She was screaming for help, mostly to the Lord, Adams reported. "If I get out of this, I'll never use a cuss word again," she promised loudly, as they pulled her into the wagon.

The employee in charges of bloodhounds, R.J. Ritchie, had heard the commotion and raced ahead of the inmates. He jumped out from behind a rock as the inmates approached, and the shooting began. Ritchie killed all three inmates and Miss Foster was wounded again.

But the prison break failed, and "Miss Foster did go to church after that," according to the news reports.

Before statehood, a train was bringing inmates here to the federal jail, in 1905. The jail became the county jail, when Oklahoma was granted statehood, the speaker explained.

The train stopped behind the old ice house, where the former restaurant is located. Some "oldtimers" guarded the prisoners, and one promised to shoot any of them "graveyard dead" if they tried to escape. So there were no incidents, Adams stated.

Rick Owens was the first executioner at the prison, and the first executions were by hanging. Owens built the gallows, and charged \$100 for the hanging. Adams said he was offered \$50 and he said "no," so the figured was upped to \$100.

In 1936 an inmate named Arthur Gooch was the first inmate executed. He made quite a talk, blaming his troubles in "white lightning, wild women" and running with the wrong crowd, Adams recalled from the news reports.

The inmate's wife was pregnant at the time, and later the son wrote, to find out who his father was.

Adams answered him but the son died before he received the letter. Ben Glover was later the prison executioner.

The last inmate executed in the electric chair was named French, who killed a fellow inmate. Mike Mayfield was the executioner at that time, said Adams.

Movie star Robert Mitchum was in a movie made at the prison and the movie started with Adams with a shotgun, operating the East Gate, and the movie ended as Adams closed the gate, he said.

Adams said he saw two killings at the prison. He also saw a man who had been shot in the eye and one arm "and they tried to gut him." Adams said when they tried to cut his throat, he "was a heavy guy" and he held his throat, which saved his life.

There were three or four large paints displayed near the "drunk tank" the speaker said. They were painted by a German they called Conrad ("Mad Man") Mass. One painting was of Mary and Joseph; one was of Washington at Valley Forge and one was a Thanksgiving picture of the Indians and the Pilgrims eating together.

The pictures had holes in them where prison officials had tried to get the attention of the inmates by shooting a gun in the air.

The German inmate was offered a parole due to his painting talent, but he did not want to leave without his paintings, so he died in prison, Adams said.

Adams said he put plastic strips over the windows of older people in the winter. Someone donated the plastic and he did the initial work in behalf of the Cox-Chandler Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police.

However, when people kept calling him, he bought the plastic "out of his own pocket", over the years, and continued the project.

He said he received a State Humanitarian Award and a Community Service Award for his work.

Two Coaches Give Program On Girls' Softball, Basketball Teams

Two men coaches of women's MHS sports presented our Oct. 16 program.

Jack Cumbie is the coach of girls' softball and David Holt, coach for girls' basketball at the high school. Cumbie said he has lived here for 20 years, but this is his first year as coach.

Every ballgame, the Softball Team "got better," Coach Cumbie said.

He brought team members Porsha Green and Kim Waldrip with him.

Coach Holt said he likes McAlester and has enjoyed being here.

Holt said he likes the "work ethic" here.

Coach Holt brought team members Ashton Santine, Portia Green and Felilcia Henderson to the meeting.

Coach Cumbie said there are two seniors, two juniors and "the rest freshmen" on his softball team.

Attendance, Visitors and Handshakers

Last week there were 50 in attendance, with no visitors, except the Students Guests from McAlester High School. The "Good Citizens" for October have been Ashton Santine and Eddie Shimp.

The previous week there were also 50, including Bill Holt and speakers David Holt and Jack Cumbie, all guests of Mary Shannon.

On Oct. 9, there were 52 present. Grace Dudley was a guest of Dick Dudley and Rev. Stephanie Sweeney, guest of Wayne Hanway.

HANDSHAKERS AND JOKERS-If you think there has been some money laundering with the handshaking, listen to the deal on the new drawing.

"Tickets" are \$1, and the guest speaker "usually" draws the winning ticket out of those who have bought them that week.

Then the "lucky" member (who has not won anything but a chance to draw the Joker,) picks a card from the deck that Brett Smith carries around.

Brett says when a member draws a card and it is not the Joker, he tears the card up, so that eventually someone will get the Joker (and whatever cash there is.)

Randy was the first lucky member not to draw the Joker, two weeks ago. Betty Talley was the second and she didn't draw the right card either. (Attorney Ronnie May drew for her. Everyone was wondering why he was taking part.)

Soon we'll find out how it works out. (However, we probably won't hear any explanation of what the odds are, of winning with a dollar ticket.)

Oh yes, the Handshakers...Jim Thompson gave the dollar to Larry Auld last week. Evans McBride gave it to Tim Whipps the week before. And Greg McNall gave the buck to Bob Saunier, on Oct. 9

Our apologies to Betty Talley, for saying she couldn't remember who she gave the dollar to, in the last McAlester ROTA. She gave it to Mark Roath, and we shouldn't have called it a "cover up," but we thought she couldn't remember, and couldn't resist. Sorry, Betty. -Fred Turner