

1 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Mr. Wishoff.

2 MR. WISHOFF: Good morning.

3 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Good morning.

4 MR. WISHOFF: I'd like to thank the panel for
5 inviting me to speak this morning. I'm very happy to be in Las
6 Vegas. I'm Josh Wishoff. I'm a recovering compulsive gambler.
7 At this time I have gone almost six months without placing a bet
8 and I'm feeling really great.

9 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Congratulations.

10 MR. WISHOFF: Thank you. I grew up in Glendale,
11 California and I attended Hoover High School and later attended a
12 local junior college and from there I transferred to San Diego
13 State University where I graduated with a bachelor's degree in
14 psychology. Currently now I'm living in Palm Springs, California
15 and I am single and living alone.

16 One thing I wanted to mention was as far back as 17
17 years ago I used to take trips to Nevada, Lake Mead in
18 particular, houseboat vacations and it was a particularly good
19 time and I wanted to bring it up because on the return from the
20 vacation, we stopped off in Las Vegas. My parents liked to stop
21 off. Usually we were with another couple that would go along
22 with us and I believe that was my real first exposure to Las
23 Vegas and the casinos.

24 I can remember my mother, I was about 12, 13 at the
25 time, her taking me around just showing me different places. I
26 remember Circus Circus in particular and I believe that was the
27 real first exposure to the noise and the glamour and the glitter
28 of gambling and slot machines.

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1 Then later, when I was in San Diego attending San
2 Diego State, I had a job there while I was attending college,
3 taking bingo players up to a local Indian gaming casino and it
4 was there that I got my first taste of real gambling. It all
5 started with the video keno machine and a local friend of mine
6 wanted me to play he had taken me over there and wanted me to
7 just place a bet. I said, "Okay, I'll go along with it," and
8 then he left and I stayed and played a little bit more and from
9 there on, it just grew.

10 I started looking around the casino and I noticed
11 some more machines and got more interested in it and at that
12 point --

13 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Mr. Wishoff, how old were you at
14 that time?

15 MR. WISHOFF: At that time I was in college. I was
16 19. And so I started getting more interested in all the slot
17 machines. And at that point I started requesting that particular
18 run more often. And then I took it on -- I got so interested I
19 wanted to check out other casinos in that particular area of San
20 Diego and I started going more often but I was just like a
21 periodic or binge gambler at that point.

22 Also during that time, my dad owns his own business
23 and he does -- every year in October, early November, they have a
24 trade show here in Las Vegas and during that time when I was in
25 college I would accompany him out here and help him but I --
26 during that time I was very involved with gambling and very often
27 at night I would go gambling at local casinos often till maybe
28 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning; whereupon, the very next day where

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1 I'd have to get up probably two or three hours later. I was very
2 tired and not able to function as I would if I had gotten a good
3 night's sleep.

4 One instance that I do remember that happened quite
5 often was my dad is not a gambler. He just -- he gambles
6 occasionally but he's not a compulsive gambler and he would
7 always mention to me the way, like you start with a certain
8 amount of money and then once that's gone, you leave and I
9 remembered him saying that and I always remember when I would
10 finish up, I would never even have enough to take a cab ride back
11 to the hotel. I would end up walking.

12 After that point I moved to Palm Springs just over a
13 year ago in October of 1997 on my own and for the following eight
14 months I became a serious compulsive gambler. I didn't have a
15 job at that time and I believed my job at the time was going to
16 the casino. The biggest attraction there were three local Indian
17 gaming casinos right next to where I lived in Palm Springs there
18 and it was like an escape. That was the biggest enticement.
19 They were all so close.

20 When I lived in San Diego, they were pretty much
21 distant so that kept me more of a binge periodic gambler. There
22 were about three casinos within about 30 minutes driving time of
23 where I was at. One thing that was kind of funny when I was
24 gambling, when I was out of control, I developed some
25 superstitions when I was gambling and a few that I most remember
26 was one time when I left my -- I had my porch light on, I'd won a
27 big jackpot and so from that point on, every time I left, I felt

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1 if I didn't have my porch light on, I wouldn't win anything, so I
2 always left it on.

3 And one other one was when I was driving to the
4 casinos, with stop lights, if I hit them all green, I thought I
5 was going to be lucky that night and I would be winning. During
6 this time I didn't have any responsibility. When I was living on
7 my own, couldn't pay my utilities. One utility was temporarily
8 shut off. A lot of the others were close to that point. I had
9 max'd out a lot of credit cards. When I finally did get a job,
10 after the credit cards were max'd out, I was going into my
11 paychecks I received every two weeks.

12 It -- I ended up -- kind of the routine I was in was
13 I would write checks for bills and then drop them off at the post
14 office. Then I would hit the casino, gamble, lose all of that
15 money and then have to stop payment on all of those checks. So
16 it wasn't really a good lifestyle at the time that I had. And
17 basically it was at this point that I did hit my bottom point.
18 The money ran out and I had incurred a debt of over 15,
19 \$16,000.00.

20 Also, I had -- I was carrying a lot of weight on my
21 shoulders at this time because while I was -- for about the seven
22 months I was there, I was keeping this a secret from my parents.
23 I was living in and currently am living in their condominium in
24 Palm Springs and they had no idea that I was an out of control
25 compulsive gambler. They did get wise a couple of months ago and
26 I remember the exact date I had to tell them that I was a
27 compulsive gambler. It was very hard and they were very patient
28 and when I finally did tell them, even though they didn't

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1 understand a lot about it, they were very comforting and wanted
2 to know more about it.

3 And I told them about the debt I had accrued
4 gambling. But for me, after I told them, I felt like a big
5 weight was lifted off my shoulders. I felt so much better. It
6 was like a 50,000 ton weight was lifted off because every time
7 they would periodically come down and visit me in Palm Springs
8 and I would have receipts I would always have to hide and
9 anything that would even remotely give them an indication that I
10 was gambling I would have to either hide or discard.

11 They did agree to help me. I also had to promise I
12 would get additional help. What they agreed to do was sort of
13 become my money managers. They handled all of my bills at the
14 time and still do at this time. I get a weekly allowance that I
15 have to - - for just like weekly car expense and food and
16 clothing and that sort of thing. And the paychecks that I earn
17 now I send directly to them and then that all goes like into a
18 pot and they've also -- out of the pot they help me with debts
19 that I have incurred with gambling, bills and sorts of things
20 like that.

21 As of this point, they're still taking care of all
22 the debts that I have and making allowances for that. I'm very
23 grateful that they have agreed to help me because if they hadn't,
24 I would probably -- I'm not sure where I would be living. I
25 would probably still be gambling and one grateful thing that I
26 wanted to mention is that I found out very young that I had a
27 compulsive gambling problem and that I was able to stop it at

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1 this point instead of gambling for maybe another 15 or 20 years
2 and get even more serious.

3 And the lifestyle that I have now, I'm greatly
4 enjoying. I love humor. I believe that's a good part of
5 recovery and it's all around better. I'm getting better
6 socially. When I was gambling I wasn't very social. I loved it
7 at the casino. That was like my home away from home. It was an
8 escape. I was treated like royalty there. I knew a lot of
9 people. If I had nothing else to do, that's where I would go.
10 For me, I believe the biggest enticement for gambling was the
11 rush of adrenaline thinking I was possibly going to win a
12 jackpot.

13 And I was a very big time chaser. I loved -- I
14 always wanted to go back and win back losses and get even, as
15 they say. That was one thing I really wanted to do. And I
16 always had the dream of winning \$150,000.00 jackpot. But I
17 greatly enjoy the lifestyle I have now. I don't feel I have the
18 need to gamble and there's a lot of other things in life that I'm
19 enjoying now. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you, Mr. Wishoff.

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