

1 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Dolly, welcome.

2 DOLLY: Madam Chairperson and Members of the
3 Commission welcome to Arizona.

4 My name is Dolly and I'm a compulsive gambler and I'd
5 like for you to note that I said a compulsive gambler not a
6 compulsive gamer. I didn't play games, I gambled.

7 I'm real proud to be here today to talk to you and
8 tell you just a small part of my story and it is just a small
9 part I could speak for hours on what gambling has done to me
10 personally and the effects that it's had on my family, but I
11 realize the clock is ticking. So I'll try to tell you a little
12 bit about it.

13 Prior to becoming a compulsive gambler I used to be I
14 guess you would call it a social gambler. I would just make an
15 occasion trip to Laughlin, Las Vegas when my mother would come
16 out from Ohio and it was a special time for us. And we'd take
17 \$200.00 and spend the weekend and had fun, actually had a lot of
18 fun.

19 My first trip to a casino in Arizona, however, was
20 after Fort McDowell opened back up after being closed by the
21 state government sometime in 1992. I saw an advertisement saying
22 they had slot machines and thought it would be a lot of fun to
23 go. I'm a realtor and I was supposed to be at an open house that
24 Saturday morning and my co-worker and I talked about this and
25 decided to skip work and check the casino out. I had \$40.00 on
26 me and within that first hour something horrible happened; I won
27 two \$1,000.00 jackpots. I didn't want to tell my husband about
28 this so I immediately chose to lie and that was a choice. He did

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1 not gamble, he didn't like gambling and to be honest today I
2 didn't want him to ruin this for me. This was the most fun I
3 think I'd ever had. It was a very exciting day.

4 It all started out very innocently. I never dreamed
5 in my wildest imagination that this was the beginning of an
6 illness. An illness that would rob me of my sanity, my families
7 trust, and more importantly my own self respect. It robbed me of
8 the wonderful life that I had known and little did I know that my
9 life would never be the same.

10 For about the first seven months or so, it seemed
11 like I won most of the time. And I would go to the casino three
12 or four times a week and often just for a few hours. Then I
13 started losing. And when the winning streak ended, I started
14 using those ATM machines. And I would justify using this by
15 thinking I've got to win my -- I've got to win this back and as
16 soon as I win it back I'll pay these astronomical bills and then
17 I'm finished with gambling. Well, that never happened.

18 And I'd like to also mention that prior to gambling
19 in this casino I was a very responsible person. My husband has
20 often said that I could stretch ten dollars into twenty. And I
21 was really responsible in every aspect of my life. I've raised
22 three children, I've taught them to be honest and I don't know
23 what came over me other than I'm compulsive when it came to
24 gambling.

25 At the casino, money didn't have any value to me
26 whatsoever, it was just a means to play. I didn't give a thought
27 to what I was doing to myself or to my family, the only thing
28 that mattered was staying in the action.

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1 Sometime in 1993, I knew I had a problem. My
2 marriage was on the rocks, and at that time I was lonely I felt
3 that my husband didn't really care about me. My children were
4 grown. They didn't need me anymore so I went to the casino. And
5 when I wasn't at the casino I might as well have been because my
6 thoughts were always there.

7 So in 1993 I attended my first 12 step meeting and I
8 was sitting there amongst all these strangers and I couldn't help
9 but think to myself why am I here? I heard these people talk
10 about losing their families, losing their businesses, their
11 friends and my blindness to my growing addiction concealed the
12 fact that I was headed down the same troubled road that these
13 other people were on. Sadly, I didn't go back.

14 By the summer of 1994, I was totally out of control.
15 I had received several credit cards in my name only, didn't let
16 my husband know, I even obtained a post office box so that I
17 didn't have to be the first one to run to the mail box. So I
18 really hid my addiction well. I was going to Fort McDowell
19 almost every day. The change girls knew my name, the people at
20 the window knew me. The casino would authorize checks for me for
21 up three hundred dollars a day but before long the comptroller,
22 the general manager of the casino, would simply put their
23 initials on my check and then I could cash them at will. When I
24 was forced to leave because I ran out of money I was just
25 devastated. But on my way home, I would promise God always
26 through my tears, that I would never ever go back. But by the
27 time I got home and had to tell my family more lies of my

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1 whereabouts I was already making plans on my next trip. I was on
2 this roller coaster and I couldn't get off.

3 In July of 1994, I finally maxed out all five of my
4 credit cards. And these were cards that were used only for
5 gambling. I needed to go to the dentist, but yet I couldn't
6 afford to, but I could afford to gamble. I wouldn't buy myself
7 anything, all of my money went for my addiction.

8 My husband and I separated and sadly I have to say
9 how he found out about my gambling. He went to the bank to close
10 our account and they told him he couldn't close the bank account
11 until this Visa bill was paid. Well, to his knowledge we had no
12 Visa bill. And so he confronted me and I did what I became so
13 clever at doing, I lied. I did admit to that one credit card and
14 he didn't know about the other four. I've also stolen money from
15 my son to pay my bills and to also keep me in action.

16 In October 1994 I hit my bottom, I drove to the
17 casino and I planned on being there for only a few hours.
18 Thirty-two hours later I walked out of the casino defeated. I
19 had to take a calculator to find out how much money I had spent
20 and they allowed me to spend thirty two hundred dollars in the
21 period of time.

22 I placed a phone call that day for help and I've been
23 in recovery ever since, I go to meetings.

24 My husband saw changes in me. He saw that I was
25 becoming the old Dolly that he knew and wanted to come home. And
26 so we have -- we've worked this out.

27 But I have to let you know life was going great, my
28 marriage was mending I regained my families trust I was paying

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1 off all my gambling debts and regularly attending meetings. Life
2 had meaning again for me and I hadn't gambled in almost a full
3 year.

4 But then on January 11, 1996, I learned a valuable
5 lesson; an addiction waits patiently to rear it's ugly head. I
6 found myself once again at a casino. And I won, I won \$2500 and
7 I couldn't put it back fast enough.

8 I will tell you that I didn't lie about that episode.
9 I called my sponsor immediately and let my husband know. I
10 haven't gambled since, I know I am not cured, I know I suffer
11 from something that is not normal. I do have support from my
12 husband, my family, my friends in the program and I know I have
13 to be on guard at all times.

14 Today I am a responsible person and I don't ever want
15 to go back to that life as a gambler and that's what it was to
16 me.

17 I am trying to regain the trust of my family. And
18 even today if I am missing for a few hours my family becomes
19 worried. I'm sure it's going to take me the remainder of my life
20 to win back their trust.

21 And I need for you to hear me say this: I'm not
22 against gambling or casinos. For the people who can gamble
23 normally and responsibly, that's fine. What I'm here for is to
24 help educate and make aware the problem of compulsive gambling.

25 There is a percentage of gamblers who become
26 addicted. This is an illness and has to be -- and has no
27 boundaries. It can affect the very young, it can affect any of
28 you and your loved ones.

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1 And I feel that a compulsive gambler, if you are
2 compulsive, it will touch the lives of 15 to 20 people that are
3 close to them. It effects their employment, society and social
4 activities. It also encourages bankruptcies. Many times the
5 gamblers lives end in suicide.

6 The gambling addiction is not understood as other
7 addictions are such as alcoholism or drug abuse. And it's time
8 that the public be made aware of the destruction of compulsive
9 gambling and how -- what it creates all of that destruction.

10 And I couldn't help but wonder this morning how many
11 Americans spent more than they could afford to buy those lottery
12 -- that power ball tickets and I'm very pleased to say they
13 didn't get my dollar.

14 And I'd also like to make one quick reference I heard
15 something today about a statement earlier and gamblers anonymous
16 is self supporting, declining all outside donations and I needed
17 for you to know that.

18 So I just thank you for the opportunity to tell you a
19 little bit about my story and I hope I made sense.

20 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Yes you did indeed and thank you,
21 Dolly. I should say for the benefit of the audience whenever we
22 have anyone testify from Gamblers Anonymous we only use first
23 names and so I didn't want to imply a level of familiarity that
24 was not indeed there, but thank you very much for your testimony.

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