

MY STORY

Joined the U.S. Navy in 1948 after I graduated from HS when I was a 17 year 8 month old naïve, clean cut, little old southern boy from southern Louisiana. Consumed no alcohol at the time.

Father had abandoned my mother when I was born in 1931. Just the alcoholic sperm donor. I finally met him when he showed up in Los Angeles in 1957 still drinking, where he died an alcoholic with cirrhosis of the liver.

I spent most of my early life with my grandparents, attended a “live in” boarding school then when I graduated from high school, and joined the Military to escape.

Volunteered for the Navy and went through Medical Training in San Diego California as a Surgical Technician. Transferred to the Long Beach Naval Hospital for my one year internship then transferred to the Marine Corps Fleet Marine Force at Barstow California assigned to the dispensary there for about a year.

History of my drinking started when I was transferred to the Naval Hospital on Guam Marianas Island during the Korean War where I was assigned to the Orthopedic Surgical Operating Rooms and Orthopedic Wards,

The screams, smells and suffering of military casualties coming through the surgical wards from the Conflict were not a pretty thing to experience and caused me a lot of mental and emotional stress and a lot of anger.

I would nip a few shots after my day of being in those surgical rooms and ward duty to ease the trauma of what I was experiencing going around in my head. I will not shock you with the details of this duty but it really wasn't very pretty. Wars are Hell and conflicts around the world have been going on way too long – but I am not here to give you my views on that.

After a year of this type of duty I was transferred back to SFO and Honorably Discharged from the Military service in October 1952 suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and I am still fighting with the VA about that.

VA says “I did not suffer any stressors” - I say I did. Now my attorney and I are fighting them in Federal court and I will supply photos in court and see if they are stressors for them.

Attended college in Pasadena California at California Institute of Technology under the GI Bill - got an Electrical Engineering degree and went to work for the Santa Fe Railway initially, then Later International Business Machines followed by many – many other companies during my career - Due mainly from my drinking. The drinking continued – I drank more and more and I will not bore you with a protracted “Drunk a Log”. Let's just say it wasn't pretty

My first wife and I had two sons, a nice home in San Francisco Bay area, we had new automobiles - 28 foot sailboat everything that a family would want or need.

We were transferred to Europe twice with my job and there the alcoholism really blossomed. Then on return to the USA Alcoholism took it all away. I drank it all away. Everything. My first wife, both of my boys, both cars, Job, savings account, my health, my home were gone, I was alone - totally alone with my bottle.

Many years of drinking followed that – I tried every way possible to stop and could not – I tried everything

I tried everything I could and the last thing I tried and the first thing that worked was Alcoholics Anonymous, thank God to an intervention my present wife surprised me with. I wanted to quit but didn't know where to turn.

If there are new comers here tonight listen up. It could clean your clock - if you don't believe it – try it! It did mine. I want the doors of AA to be open to anyone who wants what we have been freely given. We will hang together or I will die alone.

The intervention with my Pastor, my wife and a few friends opened my eyes for me. I was off the “Deep End”. That very day I grabbed hold of AA like a dying man and haven't looked back - that was February 22, 2000.

What I mean by “Grabbed hold”, I mean I stopped walking around the pool and I jumped in with both feet. No more of this Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda crap – I got serious about my alcoholism because I knew I was dying, one drink at a time and didn't know how to stop.

I have heard that if you walk twelve miles into the forest you have to walk twelve miles out – Bologna

We only have to walk into the forest of alcoholism then 12 Steps out of the alcoholic forest to find a new life. No matter how deep or how dark that forest is - only Twelve Steps to a new life.

I have heard it said I would get my life back? Hell, I don't want my old life back - I want another life, a new life where I am happy, joyous and free. I am convinced that AA isn't for people who WANT it, nor for people who NEED it, it is for people who DO it. I am ALL IN. not half way – ALL IN!

Look at the AA's symbol – it is a circle of Love around a Triangle with its three sides symbolizing:

UNITY – meaning we do it together – nothing is impossible when we are together - we hang together or we die alone. There is **Strength** in numbers, there is **Safety** in numbers, there is **Power** in numbers, and there is **Life** in numbers.

SERVICE – means when you put up a chair other than the one you were sitting on, you are doing service work – sharing at a meeting - helping another person stay sober – I made so much coffee when I first came into AA I felt like Juan Valdez. Still do!

RECOVERY - Total surrender, I admitted total defeat – go from a place of powerlessness to a place of power. Right here, right now, one day at a time. If I have one drink I know I would be in some place - destination unknown.

I had a sponsor once who asked me. “Just think about where you were before you came into AA.”

I said “I was in a hot tub, naked and drunk with four women in bikinis,”
That shut him up for a while.

I know that if I have even one drink I am lost – One drink – I know that and the only thing between me and that First Drink, is the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. That first drink is not possible for me if I keep the Twelve Step between me and IT. The way I would get drunk is to

give the Twelve Steps back, One Step at a time – stop helping others, stop apologizing for my hurt or wrongs to others, stop taking inventory, stop thanking my higher power.

The best predictor of what will happen tomorrow is what happened yesterday unless we do something to change that - today. I have to do that – I have to hold myself to a higher standard, I have to stop taking alcohol into my body, I have to clean away the wreckage, I have to make amends and I have to change myself completely to gain a new life and a new way of doing everything.

IT loves the “Blame Game”.
It’s her fault,
it’s his fault,
if I had a better job,
if I had the right wife,
if I had the right house,
if I drove the right car,
if I made more money,
if I had more hair,
I hated everyone,
if they only did it my way – if – if - if –

If the dog hadn’t stopped to take a dump he would have caught the rabbit.
IF I knew the man that got me drunk I’d kill him.

I feel so fortunate being here talking tonight, even though I am not a good communicator, but I know today if I went outside these rooms, I could find someone drinking themselves to death not knowing about AA being here and what it did for us.

I know how quickly I could lose my freedom and belong to **IT** (The disease).
Just like a dictator I’ll call **IT**,
First, **IT** overcomes my sense of history of myself.
Next, **IT** disengages me from my strong connections with others.
Third, **IT** pulls me away from my sense of being connected to a Higher Power greater than myself.
Fourth, **IT** makes me believe that I stand alone, that I am in charge of my complete destiny, all by myself, when I am dying of shame and embarrassment for the mess that I, acting as God, has made of my life, there **IT** is to salve the wound or solve the problem.

IT gives near perfect relief from emotional pain. But take heed of the word NEAR perfect.

Where **IT** fails are in two key areas:

First, **IT** gives NEAR perfect relief from emotional pain but takes, as **ITS** price, my most precious strength - my emotions themselves.

Second, over time **IT** ceases to give me anything and begins to take my health. Most of us begin drinking to control the way we see things, how we do things, and how we feel. Eventually most of us find that we have lost this ability through alcohol and are trapped by the substances themselves in a cycle of avoiding the emotional and physical pain and related consequences that **IT**, itself, brings to us. What a convenient, deadly perfect cycle I am caught up in.

Will power – Forget about it – I didn’t have it.
I was spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally lost.

Trapped!

I was on the alcohol ski jump with no cushion to break my fall – but that’s OK because it got me into Alcoholics Anonymous and I will be forever grateful.

I wanted to stop but could not and there is nothing between me and that First drink except the Twelve Steps.

What I have lost with alcohol isn’t coming back – I have to let that go and get a new life, free of alcohol. I would cry over what I had lost,

OH POOR ME- Poor me – I have learned through my years in this fellowship to let it go.

When one foot is in the future and the other foot is in the past - you are pissing on today.

I would cry and listen to the blues music – “I’m getting tears in my eyes laying on my pillow crying over you” or such songs.

Or “If you won’t leave me, I’ll find someone who will”

Oh Woe is me!

Today I don’t have a drinking problem I have a LIVING PROBLEM. The Past is PAST and there isn’t anything I can do about it.

Can’t bring it back no matter what I do. Can’t reinvent it! Move on!

The Big Book is the design for living. Like getting directions on a map it will give me directions on how to get there, and the 12 & 12 will guide me as to what to look for along the way. Those two books tell me all I need to know and my sponsor shows me how to apply it in my day to day life.

I was procrastinating doing my fourth Step and my sponsor was on my case, as usual, “When are you going to get started?” he’d ask.

Finally I made up my mind that I would show him so I devised a plan that I would do the ABSOLUTELY THE BEST 4th Step that has ever been done in the entire world.

I’d really show him what old Walt could do!

He would laud and magnify my name throughout AA.

He would show others what I had accomplished.

People from around the world would look at me and place palm branches under my feet.

There would be joy throughout the land.

People would put two thumbs up for me when I came around.

No one had ever done a better 4th Step in all the time AA had been in existence.

Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob would come back from their rewards to congratulate me.

I would make flip charts and have two pots of coffee going at all times.

I would go outside and ask people if my columns on the written inventories were straight and they would say that I have drawn them as well as Frank Lloyd Wright would have when he was designing a building.

And when I completed it, the world would look for a puff of white smoke coming out of the chimney as when the Pope is elected.

Yeah Right! I was like a dog trying to run on linoleum – A lot of motion but no movement.

Then my sponsor and I sat down and had a one on one session – he showed me how he had done his and we worked together, piece by piece, person by person, event by event – we worked long and hard for many days and weeks – it was finally done.

All my bags of garbage – on paper - where I saw it in black and white and could think about all the crap I had done and to whom I had done it to.

Who wants to admit defeat, who wants to write it down, who wants to tell someone else? I needed to get it out. NOW I was free of all that garbage. We had opened the cell doors and set me free – Man, what a relief!

Action is the byword
I have to Write my Step 4
I have to Talk my Step 5
I have to Write my Step 6
I have to Talk my Step 7
I have to Write my Step 8
I have to Talk my Step 9
I have to Talk my Step 10
I have to Talk my Step 11
Then I have to Help another alcoholic with my Step 12 work

A while back a woman was drinking wine at dinner and she asked me why don't you have some wine with everyone else, I answered,

“Did you ever wake up not knowing where you were, your clothes were ripped and torn, all your money was gone, didn't know where your keys were, or where you parked your car, and one shoe was missing.”

“You mean to say if you took just one drink of wine that would happen to you?”

“No! If I did that it would happen to you!”

I do the Steps: ABANDON YOURSELF TO A HIGHER POWER

Step #1 - I proved to myself I am an Alcoholic without a shadow of doubt and today, I am proud to be a member of a 12 Step Program and I try my best to help others see what they are doing to their life.

Steps #2 & #3, I trust God to see me through the difficult days & help me to remove my shortcomings & I have lots of them.

ADMIT YOUR FAULTS

#4 - I have listed all my defects in writing.

#5- I have admitted them to another person & I continue working on my steps daily. I am just human. I air out my defects and get rid of them immediately & not bury them like I did in the past.

#6 & 7 - I will continue trusting my Higher Power.

CLEAN AWAY THE WRECKAGE

#8 & #9 - I have made amends &/or restitution to all of the people on my lists.

GIVE AWAY WHAT YOU HAVE FOUND

#10 - I continue to take personal inventory daily and when I am wrong I admit it.

#11 - I have tried to improve my conscious contact with my Higher Power, it's hard sometime but I try. It is called "LIFE" and I know I can face life's problems with the help of a 12 Step Program.

#12 - I hope I can help others as much as they have helped me. This is the main reason I have compiled and written a little workbook, to help those who wish to start down the road to recover from the addiction to alcohol.

I have tried to help my home group by serving in various capacities.

At home I help with the cooking, sometimes do the shopping, I wash dishes, vacuum, clean toilets; take care of the cars, the house and the yard.

I speak to groups when asked to tell my story. I am not good at talking as I was before, but at least I try my very best. I have been told to never say "NO" in a 12 Step Program and usually don't refuse.

I do a little volunteer work with various organizations, as well.

I continue to read in the Big Book daily & sometimes I go to book and studies.

I listen to audiotapes and CD's a lot. I attend Speaker Meetings. It really helps.

I write a lot of information that might be of benefit to others, and have had it published in a workbook "Happy Days Are Here Again, Step By Step". I hope in some small way it may help others face their problems with alcohol and help them do their steps.

I try to help others & encourage them to follow the Big Book. I don't let barriers in the road stop me from my ultimate goal and that is sobriety.

The road to sobriety gets narrower, the pot holes get deeper, the curves get sharper & the ditches on each side get deeper the longer I stay in a 12 Step Program, so I must always be on guard for moments of weakness.

I am trying to get out of myself - No more Me - Me - Me. You know - it's amazing how good I feel when I do things for others instead of just taking all the time.

I have finally figured out that my Higher Power will not ask me what kind of car I drive – BUT he will ask me how many people I took the time to drive somewhere when they didn't have transportation.

I have finally figured out that my Higher Power will not ask me about the square footage of my house, BUT He will ask me how many people I took the time and care to welcome to my house.

I have finally figured out that my Higher Power will not ask me what my job title was, BUT he will ask me if I took the time to perform my job to the best of my ability.

I have finally figured out that my Higher Power will not ask me about the color of my skin, BUT he will ask me about the content of my character.

Today, my wife and I are retired & very happy, living in a home that has no mortgage, everything we own is paid for and we enjoy each others company very much and a 12 Step Program is definitely our way of life now.

A few short years ago I couldn't see over the rim of the alcoholic hole I had made for myself, but with this fellowship and with a lot of hard work, the promises are coming true, as it says on page 83 of the Big Book.

Twelve Stepping is work, but I am willing to put forth the effort and I plan on sticking with a 12 Step Program and with help from others in the Fellowship and Gods guidance I will not die a miserable stinking drunk, I hope to die a grateful sober alcoholic.

Thank you for listening – I hope someone out there has been helped with my talk – I know it has really helped me being here telling you my story and thank you for the invitation to speak tonight.

Thank you.