

POWERLESS AND INSANE

HOW OAKLAND COUNTY FOUND THEIR HIGHER POWER

A.A members from Northern Oakland County discuss their downward spiral, hitting their bottom and finding sobriety with the help of a higher power.

Poetry and song lyrics relating to alcoholism and drug use interspersed throughout.

Please contribute and help others to see that life is not hopeless. They are not alone.

Near to the door
He paused to stand
As he took his class ring
Off her hand
All who were watching
Did not speak
As a silent tear
Ran down his cheek
And through his mind
The memories ran
Of the moments they walked
And ran in the sand (hand in hand)
But now her eyes were so terribly cold
For he would never again
Have her to hold
They watched in silence
As he bent near
And whispered the words
"I love you" in her ear
As he put on his ring and wanted to die
And just then the wind began to blow
As they lowered her casket
Into the snow...
This is what happens to man alive...
When friends let friends
Drink and drive.

--- Kirstyn

I drank to numb my pain of losing my mother at a young age, being molested at a young age, being physically and mentally abused and feeling totally powerless. I wanted to feel in control and feel good. Booze was the magic elixir to take away all the bad feelings but it actually created more problems. I swore I would never let anyone ever hurt me again. I was scared, angry and distrustful of others. I was in a hopeless lonely state.

I drank, stayed out late at night and defied my foster parents. I was selfish and had total disregard for what others thought of my behavior. I wore my pain like a badge of honor. I created an illusion of strength and only wished I could live up to the illusion.

After moving out and being on my own, I drank and partied like there was no tomorrow. I wanted to be perceived as a fun loving, carefree playboy, acting like I needed no one but knowing I did.

After I married, I tried going to the bar only once a week, where I would try to drink only a few beers and not get drunk. I wanted to prove to my wife that I could drink and not get drunk. The experiment failed miserably.

I was called back to work after being laid off for 3 years and was in classroom training for the job. Just before lunch, a man walked into the classroom and explained a program that the company had for people with alcohol problems. He basically gave a short 10 minute "open talk" about what his life was like when he drank and how he quit drinking and how his life had greatly improved.

At that very moment, I identified with the man's story. I had become everything I never wanted to be. I let myself and family down and was heartbroken. As soon as we were dismissed for lunch, I drove to the closest gas station and made a call to my minister at church. I had talked with the minister in the past about the arguments my wife and I had about my drinking. The first thing I said to the minister was, "I am an alcoholic and I need help".

That night I met with the minister; we talked, prayed and he sent me to meet an AA member who took me to my first AA meeting that very same night.

Many years have passed since that night, and I have never had to pick up a drink.

AA has helped me to turn my life around. Now the money I no longer spend on booze is helping to achieve many goals I have set and the pain of the past is rarely in the present.

AA has truly taught me to live a useful, productive and enjoyable life. With the help of God, the fellowship and AA's "12 Steps", you can too.

Breathe it in and breathe it out
And pass it on, it's almost out
We're so creative, so much more

We're high above but on the floor

It's not a habit, it's cool, I feel alive
If you don't have it you're on the other side

The deeper you stick it in your vein
The deeper the thoughts, there's no more pain
I'm in heaven, I'm a god
I'm everywhere, I feel so hot

It's not a habit, it's cool, I feel alive
If you don't have it you're on the other side
I'm not an addict (maybe that's a lie)

It's over now, I'm cold, alone
I'm just a person on my own
Nothing means a thing to me
(Nothing means a thing to me)

Free me, leave me
Watch me as I'm going down
Free me, see me
Look at me, I'm falling and I'm falling.

-- "Not An Addict", K's Choice

I don't care what you think as long as it's about me
The best of us can find happiness in misery

-- "I Don't Care", Fall Out Boy

**Lonliness and fear were my ills.
Alcohol was my medication.**

My father died when I was six years old. I was the oldest child of three and assumed the role of the “responsible one.” I forced myself to grow up and become independent. This way, life would be easier for my mom. My brother and sister would receive more attention and economic resources. In retrospect, this probably didn’t help them much and only served to isolate myself from them.

Alcohol was present in my home as a child but rarely used. Occasionally, my mom would have a glass of wine in the evening, but that was it. However, alcoholism was in my genes. My mother’s two brothers and sister were alcoholics, though I never saw them drink. They had recovered and sober for decades. The other died of the disease.

Because of my forced independence, once I grew into an adult, I felt alone. I never allowed myself to become attached to anyone, rely on anyone or emotionally open up. I was an introvert afraid to approach people. Alcohol became a natural support system.

I went to a college that was 80% male. I knew no one and was scared to death. In my first six months, I made only three friends. One of them told me I needed female friends, so I should join a sorority. I did. I made some great friends, many of whom I still have contact with after 20 years. To get comfortable with them and open up, I used alcohol to break the ice. I learned that drinking games were a good way to meet a lot of people and drink a lot of alcohol.

Though I got along with all of my sorority sisters, my closest friends drank like I did – every weekend and all night. With these friends, the amount of alcohol I drank was never out-of-the-ordinary. At the time, I was capable of controlled drinking – stopping if I needed to drive, had to work the next day or just didn’t feel like drinking anymore

I didn’t experience the traditional alcoholic pitfalls in my college years. No blackouts, no drugs and no drunk driving arrests. I always held a job, excelled at school and did not lose friends as a direct result of my alcohol consumption.

After college, I went to graduate school. I made friends and, just like college, gravitated to the people who liked to drink. Though we didn’t have much money, we managed to keep ourselves supplied with alcohol.

While in graduate school, I experienced loneliness and depression. My research project encountered major roadblocks. I didn’t feel I received enough support from my family. I didn’t see my college friends enough. I craved security – emotionally and mentally.

This is when the first signs of alcoholism crept into my life. Drinking alone, being the last one drinking, having fuzzy recall of the night before, acting emotionally insane while drinking, pondering suicide.

My second year in grad school, I had a boyfriend. I sure did treat him poorly! At the time I told myself he wasn’t Mr. Right, but he was Mr. Right Now, so it didn’t matter. In reality, it was my alcoholic behavior that led me to disrespect him. That is an amend I’d like to make but am hesitant for fear of hurting him.

For example, one night of drinking, I decided I wanted to call on him. This was after I broke up with him but was stringing him along. I was drunk and my friends wanted to drive me home. No, I insisted. I’d walk to his house, which was a few blocks from the bar, then he would drive me home when I was ready to leave. He wasn’t home, leaving me stranded. My car was parked at the commuter lot about two miles away. My apartment was also about two miles away. The logical action

was to walk home, but I decided I didn't want to have to walk to get my car in the morning. I headed for the commuter lot. I don't remember much of the walk except that my shoes hurt so I took them off and kept walking. I sliced my toe and didn't even notice until I put my shoe back on. I had to throw the shoes away because of all the blood.

But looking back, I knew God was with me. He protected me from so much, I am forever grateful.

When I was 26, I decided I had enough of being alone. I met a man who gave me lots of attention and had a big loving family. There were some incompatibilities, but I thought they either didn't matter or that once we were more comfortable with one another, they would work themselves out. The fact that he still lived at home, didn't have many friends and did not have a significant dating history never sounded an alarm. I was happy that I found someone who would support me, be with me and provide me with the emotional security I desired.

We shared a hobby: drinking. He enjoyed spending time at parties and in bars consuming as much alcohol as possible. So did most of his family. No one criticized me when I drank too much. We planned vacations and nights on the town around alcohol. Almost everything we did involved drinking. I even slammed a beer before walking down the aisle to get married. That should have been my first clue.

I got in the habit of drinking excessively at all functions, relying on my husband to drive home. Even if he had too much to drink, he didn't mind driving under the influence.

I no longer needed to drink alone. Even if we had no weekend plans, all I had to do was come home with a case of beer and he drank with me. More often than not, he was the one who bought the case of beer. The person I married drank more than me on a regular basis, so alcohol abuse did not stand out as abnormal.

I managed my binge drinking well, just like I did throughout college and grad school. No blackouts, no drugs, no drunk driving arrests, held a good job. I didn't drink during my pregnancies. It never occurred to me that I was headed for alcoholism. At the time, I was not dependent and could stop drinking for periods of time, but the point was, I didn't want to stop drinking. In the end, this is what made me an alcoholic.

During my third pregnancy, I entered a deep depression, near despair, and sometimes didn't even want to get out of bed. Occasionally I was suicidal. After the birth of my daughter, the depression developed into severe post-partum depression. We were also building a new house, so in addition to being responsible for three children under the age of four, I was making most of the decisions related to the new house. I realized my husband was selfish, irresponsible, lazy and didn't respect me as a person. I was dissatisfied with my marriage and unhappy with my life. I couldn't wait to start drinking.

Drinking for pleasure decreased and using alcohol as a coping mechanism increased. Anytime something went wrong, I drank away the stress and bad feelings. Whether it was a frustration with my husband (which I kept inside to avoid his retaliation) or something as simple as spilt milk, alcohol was a good way to deal with it. It calmed my mind. I started drinking larger quantities and during the week instead of just weekends.

I had a nervous breakdown when my husband left me alone for the weekend to go hunting. I was saddled with three children, building a house and without much help from him in general. I called him up in tears asking him to come home. He did and later pointed out that I never thanked him for cutting short his trip.

It started adding up. His treatment of me finally took away my feelings of self-worth. I was a scientist with a good job, not a cleaner, cooker, babysitter and wife to service him.

At work, I was assigned to a new project. I needed to be trained and worked with a man that I casually interacted with in the past. I had always been attracted to him but never gave him a second thought. Now, we were together almost all the time. He gave me a lot of attention and was so patient. Combine this with my dissatisfaction with and lack of love in my marriage, I became attached to him.

A year and a half later, I was laid off. I was upset because I lost my job, but also because I would no longer have close contact with this man. We had lunch one day. He opened up and told me he was interested in having a relationship. Mind you, at the time, I was married and he was married, but my alcoholic mind already existed. We started an affair.

We saw each other as often as we could, given our circumstances. We engaged in risky behavior, which could have done us serious damage, within our families and in the rest of our lives. The affair involved lying and cover-ups. It put me into two different worlds: my miserable married life, where I stayed married for the kids, and a fantasy life with my lover where everything was perfect. I experienced great stress even though I enjoyed the release of that second life.

I did so many things during that time that could have ruined me, but God was looking out for me. He had a plan.

Two years into the affair, I had enough of my husband's immature behavior and unreasonable expectations. I told him I wanted a divorce.

The next year was very hard on me. My ex-husband refused to move out of the house. He hammered me constantly to reconsider. He told me I was wrong and told me my feelings weren't valid. He tried to take the kids away from me based on my drinking.

He installed spyware on the computer and discovered my affair. I stupidly had saved every exchange between my lover and me – thousands of emails! HE hacked into my email and began forwarding my emails to his email account. By a quirk of fate and good timing, I caught him in the act (he was at home and I was at work) and was able to cut him off.

I do feel God was looking over me that day. If I hadn't caught him in the act and prevented him from obtaining all the emails, I would have been in big trouble. OK, I was already in big trouble, but it would have been trouble times ten. In the end, my husband obtained about five months worth of emails, a small fraction of what was there.

When I got home that day, he proceeded to make my life a living. The situation seemed hopeless and I was unable to cope.

The next day, I began drinking very early. He called his parents to come pick up the kids while he talked me out of doing anything stupid. Then he took me out for sushi and drinks and bought beer on the way home! How's that for helping someone who drank too much?! But in retrospect, right at that moment, he saved me from myself, for which I am grateful.

However, the next day was different. He rewarded me for the breakdown by taking me to court to have me thrown out of the house and to be awarded the children as his sole legal and physical custody. The court found this ridiculous. It ordered that neither of us drink in the presence of the children. I was able to comply with this for a while...

Over the next three months, he locked me out of credit card and bank accounts, damaged my car (\$1400 worth), damaged my house, refused to discuss divorce terms, continued to harass me about staying together, continued to harass me for being a "whore," called my friends and family in an attempt to alienate them from me.

My behavior grew erratic. I removed items from the house "to make sure I would get them.". They were stupid things, like loaf pans and glassware. I removed all the picture books from the house, thinking he would destroy them or who

knows what. It was illogical alcoholic thinking. I was trying to find a way to gain control. I continued to see my boyfriend even though my husband (and children) knew about it. I made sure my boyfriend and I drank any time we met up.

Six months before the finality of divorce, I completed the downward spiral and hit bottom. Before that, I used alcohol as a coping mechanism but was not completely dependent on it.

I drank earlier in the day, in my car, while shopping, while gardening, while anything. I began drinking vodka, something I never thought I'd do. Typical for women alcoholics, I would hide bottles and cans all over the place. I knew that 50% of the time, I'd forget where I hid my empties, so I tried to put them in "regular" spots. My husband started catching on to my spots, so I'd find new ones, only to forget where they were.

I realize now that I would wake up drunk. After the drunk wore off, I'd need some more, even if it were 8am! My mental "cravings" had become physical dependence, even if I didn't recognize this at the time, but I still did not drink every day. That was my reassurance that I was "OK".

Then I received the recommendation from the Friend of the Court for custody. It was recommended that out of every two weeks, my husband have the children nine days and I have them five. The reason was because I discontinued therapy and spent nights with my boyfriend. I was devastated. I didn't know what I'd do without my children for that long on a regular basis.

I started a week-long drinking binge. I called into work sick on Monday after having drunk for five days in a row. I lay around the house feeling self-pity and despair. I had suicidal thoughts but didn't have the energy to act on it. So I drank more. I was scheduled to close on my house refinancing that evening, but I was in no condition. My husband took the kids at his mom's, sat with me during the signing of the papers (I've wondered if that was legal if I was totally drunk!) then took me to the hospital.

I don't remember much from that night, except being really tired and being put in a wheelchair. I woke up the next morning feeling much better. My mental state improved. I was interviewed by a nurse.

"Do you have thoughts of suicide right now?"

"No."

"Do you drink every day?"

"No."

"OK. You go home."

I couldn't go home right away because my blood alcohol level was too high. I didn't sober up until 2pm!

When they gave me the OK, I called my husband. He told me he wouldn't pick me up and not to come home. I had nowhere else to go. I couldn't stay in the hospital. My boyfriend picked me up and dropped me off at my house. I discovered that my husband fled with the children, taking my cell phone, car keys and computer. I wandered around the house aimlessly, cleaning up my mess from the day before. He eventually came home around 10pm. I told him I would leave the next day. He gave me my car keys and cell phone, but not the computer.

I was non-functional and went to stay at my mom's. I made appointments to see two therapists and attended AA meetings for the next three days. I was able to go to work by Friday for half a day.

I remained sober for two weeks, drank one night, then was sober for another three weeks. The lawyers, he and I met to work out a settlement. Due to Friend of the Court recommendation, I was screwed when it came to negotiating more time with my kids.

But God was somewhere by my side, though his way of helping was strange. A few weeks before the settlement meeting, my husband caught me removing items from the house (long story). He ran up to me while I was putting the stuff in the trunk of my car and grabbed me by the arm to stop me.

I bruise easily and prominently. A few days later, bruises appeared on my forearms and wrists. I made no connection and was puzzled. I get a lot of bruises, but they are usually on my knees and legs. Soft tissue? Then I remembered the incident with my husband. The bruises showed the pattern of fingers. I took pictures of my arm and also took pictures of the damage he did to my house and car.

With pictures in hand, I came out of the settlement meeting with six days custody out of fourteen and him receiving eight days. At the end of the school year, custody would switch to seven days me, seven days him. I agreed to conditions related to my drinking and mental health. I agreed to follow recommendations of my therapist (done), attend 3-5 AA meetings a week (done) and have an in home alcohol monitoring device in the form of a breathalyzer. I didn't like the idea of that last one, but I agreed in order to see my children more.

One month later, I slammed a beer, went to court and got divorced.

My husband moved out three weeks later. This coincided with when I picked up my alcohol monitoring device. Using it was humiliating. I was a 40-year-old successful scientist and mother. "I don't deserve this" I thought.

About two weeks after my husband moved out, I decided that since I was able to refrain from drinking for weeks at a time, I would be capable of controlled drinking. I got some wine and calculated out how long it would take for the alcohol to get out of my system. I figured three glasses of wine at one hour per drink. I could start drinking at 6pm and be OK by 10-11pm.

I was wrong.

I took the breathalyzer test around 10:30pm and failed. I thought, gosh, I can't believe I'm still drunk. I must be close to sober. I took the test 20minutes later and failed again.

I saw my life crumble. My husband would take the kids away from me forever and my life would be over.

I begged God to help me. I told him I was ready. I was willing to turn the outcome over to him. I had faith and trust.

God made it clear to me what to do next. At first, I lied about the test, but in the end, with more sobriety behind me, I came clean.

The Friend of the Court gave me another chance, agreeing that in early sobriety, people slip. I agreed to take the monitoring test twice a day instead of once. Nothing changed in the custody arrangement.

Since the day after the failed test, September 30, 2010, I have remained sober. I've experienced many difficult moments. With the help of AA and a wonderful therapist, I developed the coping skills to live without drink. Now, when something challenges me, I might worry and/or be angry all day. I am able to tell myself that it is God's will and everything will turn out OK. The next morning, I am fine.

Anyone can make what I have built.
And better now
Anyone can find the same white pills.
It takes my pain away.

I never thought I'd walk away from you.
I did.
But it's a false sense of accomplishment.
Every time I quit

-- "Pain", Jimmy Eat World

My Travails [edited (by author)]

I just hope this reaches people in time. God willing, it will. I have never felt so powerless over alcohol. I was born to a good, loving family in the beautifully-cold state of Michigan—

Cut the crap.

Alcoholism kills people every day. I don't need a number to verify it. I just know. As do all alcoholics. The booze is a trap; it is the Devil extending his gnarled index finger and saying, "C'mon...one won't hurt, right?" Wrong.

I knew I was powerless--*completely powerless*--over alcohol when one drink wasn't even--

E!

Nuff!

Found myself on a jail-cell bed five times.

E!

Nuff!

Embarrassed myself in front of family and peers countless times.

E!

Nuff!

Blew money like water, like it didn't even matter.

E!

Nuff!

When i turned my back on my faith and turned to a darker Higher Power.

E!

Nuff!

Woke up in shoddy neighborhoods, wondering why I was there.

E!

Nuff!

When I didn't recognize myself in the mirror.

Enough is enough is *enough*.

I was never a firm believer in the fifth step, and I am still not. To me, it sounds like caterwauling to a wall. Sure, your voice may resonate, but to what end? Self-flagellation? Guilt? Is it a step to take the "burden off the back"? Not to me.

Step 12: Carry the message on to other, still-suffering, alkie. Who the hell am *I*? I am Adam, an alkie, that's who. But, seriously? *Who* the hell am I? Who the hell is *anyone* in this program? Former alcoholics who changed their lives for the better. I ain't there yet. But I *do* have faith in the Higher Power. I *do* have faith that I will turn this around. I. *Do*. Have. *Faith*.

Because, in the end? That's what matters. Faith. Five simple letters that mean a whole hell of a lot to a whole hell of a lot of people.

Faith.

You'll meet me at a First-Step table. I'll say, "My name is Adam and..."

And the rest is History. Naw.

The rest is Recovery.

It seems like every day's the same
and I'm left to discover on my own
It seems like everything is gray
and there's no color to behold
They say it's over and I'm fine again, yeah
Try to stay sober feels like I'm dying here

And I am aware now of how
everything's gonna be fine one day
Too late, I'm in hell I am prepared now,
seems everyone's gonna be fine
One day too late, just as well

-- "Fine Again", Seether

Well it's been ten years and a thousand tears
And look at the mess I'm in.

A broken nose and a broken heart,
An empty bottle of gin
Well I sit and I pray
In my broken down Chevrolet.
While I'm singin' to myself
There's got to be another way

[Chorus:]

Take away, take away
Take away this ball and chain
I'm lonely and I'm tired
And I can't take any more pain
Take away, take away
Never to return again
Take away, take away
Take away this ball and chain

Well I've searched and I've searched
To find the perfect life.
A brand new car and a brand new suit
I even got me a little wife.
But wherever I have gone
I was sure to find myself there.
You can run all your life
But not go anywhere

[Chorus]

Well I'll pass the bar on the way
To my dingy hotel room.
I spent all my money
Been drinkin' since half past noon.
I'll wake there in the mornin'
Or maybe in the county jail.
Times are hard getting harder
I'm born to lose and destined to fail-

-- "Ball and Chain", Social Distortion

Dear Friend,

I have come to visit once again. I love to see you suffer mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially. I want to make you restless so you can not relax. I want to make you jumpy and nervous and... anxious. I want to make you agitated and irritable so everything and everybody makes you feel uncomfortable. I want you to be so confused and depressed that you can't think clearly or positively. I want to make you hate everything and everybody, especially yourself. I want you to feel guilty and remorseful for the things you have done in the past and you'll never be able to let go of. I want to make you angry and hateful toward yourself and blame everything, BUT me, for the way things are. I want you to be deceitful and untrustworthy, and to con and manipulate as many people as possible. I want to make you fearful and paranoid for no reason at all. I want to make you wake all hours of the night screaming for me. I'm even in your dreams. I want to be the first thing you think about every morning and the last thing you think about before you blackout. I'd rather kill you but I'd be happy enough to put you back in the hospital, another institution, or jail. But you know I'll be here waiting on you when you get out. I love to watch you go slowly insane. I love to see all the physical damage that I'm causing you. I can't help but to sneer and chuckle when you shiver and shake, when you freeze and sweat at the same time, when you wake up with your sheets and blankets soaking wet. It's amazing to watch you ignore yourself, not eating, not sleeping, not attending to your personal hygiene. Yes, it's amazing how much destruction I can be to your internal organs while at the same time working on your brain, destroying it bit by bit. I deeply appreciate how much you are sacrificing for me. The countless jobs you have given up for me, all the friends, whom you deeply cared for, you gave up for me. And what's more, the ones you turned against because of your inexcusable actions. I am eternally grateful, especially for the loved ones, family, and most important people in your world that you have turned yourself against. You even threw them away for me. I can not express in words the gratitude I have for the loyalty you have for me. you sacrificed all these beautiful things in life just to devote yourself completely to me. But do not despair my friend, for on me you can always depend. After you have lost all these things, you can still depend on me to keep you in a living hell, to keep your mind, body, and soul for I will not be satisfied until you are dead, my friend. Forever Yours, Your Addiction ~anonymous~

Don't fall for me

**Don't fall for me,
For I am the worst kind,
I'm the type; Who gets into your mind,**

**I'll let you fall farther,
Until you're completely mine.**

**Do not speak to me,
It is unsafe,
My voice will allure you,
Then it'll become a chase.**

**I'll fall "in-like",
While you drown in love,
Until you hand over your heart,
The worst part.**

**I'll pick at your heart,
Take it apart,
Until you can't feel,
Then the real fun starts,
I'll get in your mind,
Coaxing you with a kind; Gently voice,
Bringing you forward,
Letting you make a final choice.**

**As you stand near,
My expression will eliminate all your fear,
As I devour your lonely soul,
Leaving your broken body,
Only left with tears.**

--- Kirstyn*Margaret's Story*

My drinking life started out slow, so slow that I had a hard time convincing myself that I had a problem. I didn't drink everyday, I rarely drank to excess. Of course, when emotional turmoil jumped on my back, I knew what would help. I knew I could take the edge off with a little alcohol. I wasn't interested in getting drunk, I just wanted that slow, smooth buzz that took some of the pain away.

I slowly turned into a daily buzz, and I rarely got too drunk to be noticed. When those times did happen, I would reprimand myself and pray that I wouldn't do that again.

What made me begin to take notice was that I would be wanting a drink when most people didn't. So I was having to be sneaky in my drinking because I didn't want to be the oddball. I would check alcoholism books out of the library and read them to try and convince myself that I was not one. But more often than not, I would recognize myself in the pages. My efforts at moderation would only be half hearted.

When I began going to AA meetings, I still had a hard time convincing myself. I knew that I wasn't drinking "normal", but I was not able to compare to other's stories. Everyone else's story seemed so much worse than mine.

So, I went back and forth for a year. The final "disgusting moment" that helped me realize that I was alcoholic was a contemptable look from one of my children. She didn't mean for me to see it, but I am so glad I did. I put the drink down that day. I surrendered to the idea that I cannot drink.

In working the 12 Steps, I have learned how to keep that emotional turmoil off my back. I learned how to walk through pain to get to a better place.

Margaret

Somewhere she is on the streets
Trying to make things better
Praying to God and breathing deep
Gotta break this long obsession
-- "Everything", Buckcherry

One Day at a Time

After the crack was gone, I got more.

And then a little more.

I took a hit and paranoia set in—From miles away, the whirling sirens of big brother become louder and louder, racing towards me at tremendous speeds and I became scared that THEY were going to arrest me. I put the crack inside my mouth (so they couldn't get it); the sirens were so loud that my ears felt like they were bleeding. The crack slid down and rested in my throat. I frantically tried to bring it back up but it fell even more. 10 minutes went by. I had to get it out damn-it. I ran to the kitchen and chugged from a jug of water, drank the entire gallon, and raced back to the bathroom. I turned on the bath water to make noise, and put one finger down my throat to make myself get sick on the floor. Finally I threw up and sifted through the vomit with my fingers, looking for a rock. But there was none...

I put the finger back in...two fingers...I puked again...I searched through vomit...no crack..."God Damn-it"...I jammed my toothbrush down my throat...I prayed "God, let me get just one"...I jabbed it in more... finally I saw some blood...but no rocks...I shoved the toothbrush in more...MORE...finally a strong gush of vomit...nothing...I stood up and cried out, "FUCK...FUCK...FUCK."

I paced...I was mad as hell...I had to get more...I brushed my teeth with the same toothbrush...looked at my face...wiped it clean in one stroke...put on a t-shirt and ball cap...I got my wallet and car keys and inconspicuously walked to my car as sirens screamed all around me...I got in the car, drove to the hood, got the stuff, drove home, made the pipe, took the first hit, heard the sirens, and put the rocks in my mouth...

I ended up in bed, shaking under the covers and hiding from the police. And waited for THEM to come through the windows and hold me down by my arms and legs and cart me off to jail like an animal.

It was a non-distinct afternoon. I noticed it was 7pm and I wanted more. But it was New Years Eve, and I was afraid to go out again. I was afraid of being pulled over. Fear won that battle. I stayed in and was asleep by midnight.

When I wasn't using, Damage Control kept me occupied. As a result of trying to cover up my secret life I was constantly cleaning the messes I left behind. I vacuumed, cleaned, washed, sprayed and deleted the evidence away. Sometimes I left work early to get a few hours of cleaning in before bringing my

daughter over. I showered to get the stench off of my skin and hair. I burned incense and candles and poured odor-removing-powder on my carpeting.

And I lied. I lied about where I'd been, where I was going, why my plans had to change, why I had no money, why I needed to borrow money, why I didn't show up. I said I was sick when I wasn't; that I worked when I hadn't. I told myself "I will stop tomorrow."

Then there's the pain that I brought to my family. The recklessness I subjected to anyone and everyone in my path. The dangers I created at work. The malicious threats I spoke to those who were against me. And the isolation that grew as the world around me had no choice but to stay away or to side against me. I continued using for a couple more months. But the nightmare of my fearful and lonely decade of the 2000's was approaching the end: I WANTED TO GET RECOVERY...AGAIN.

In the 1990's I had nearly 8 years of sobriety. I had worked the steps, been on retreats, and went to a couple thousand meetings. But I also suffered from Clinical Depression. And late in my 6th year sober I fell into the depths of self hate. I re-entered my world of hopelessness and uselessness. I thought everybody in my world was judging everything I thought and did. It got hard to breathe. I was in constant fear, and wished I was dead every day. And then with almost eight years clean and sober, I decided to use again.

I bought a pack of cigarettes and a jumbo of Old Milwaukee. I drove around and picked up a woman on the side of the road. She had crack...well what the hell. And that was my first time. I can say that it was uneventful...or so I thought at the time. I went home, went to sleep, and awoke in the morning feeling just as miserable as the last three or four hundred days before. No worse, no better, no different.

But my life was to become very different in the near future. I had relapsed. And regardless of the pain I was in...the flame of addiction inside of me was re-lit, and soon it would burn again. That one drink turned into a decade of addiction. That one hit lasted 10 years and led to divorce and the abandonment of all that I valued.

In my *decade of relapse* in the 2000's I was in and out of the program. I went through sponsors; they got tired of me, or I got tired of them. I would get 3 days or a week clean...and fall again. A few times putting together a month, only to use again. I was so proud to get 6 months clean, but used the very next day. Then I was back to the hell of using every day, or getting some clean time and using again. My contact with *recovery* was weak, but it was still there. I kept coming back.

Finally there became no doubt in my mind that I had completely and definitively crossed over a line of no return. I came to the point of being powerless over alcohol; of being powerless over *all the drugs in my repertoire*, and especially of being powerless over my new drug of choice: crack cocaine.

I asked an old friend to be my sponsor. He'd been sober since around the time of my original sobriety date. He'd been doing something right. In our early phone calls sometimes *he pissed me off!* But I'd get over it and call him the next day. He told me that I had to change my thinking and he told me that I had to pray for help. He told me to say the serenity prayer 50 times a day no matter what. He told me to pray for help whenever I wanted to use. He told me to pray that "my thoughts and desires to use would be removed."

I learned that I couldn't depend on my 'first recovery' to keep me sober. I had to start over. I needed to put what I knew into practice, but I needed to open my mind anew and become aware of my inner thought processes. I needed to reach out for help before the meetings, at meetings, and after the meetings. I needed to be involved. I needed to make coffee again. I learned that the most important reason the coffemaker makes coffee is FOR THE NEWCOMER.

I started going to work every day. I answered the phone when my children called. I showed up on time. And I kept calling my sponsor—we would talk for a bit and then he had to go; I'd call back with a crisis and he would listen and let me go; I would call when I wanted to use and he would walk me through it.

My sponsor became my friend. He loved me before I loved myself. He told me to say that "My sponsor loves me almost as much as I love myself" until I believed it. He gave me hope and he had patience! He turned out to be the perfect *combination* for the lock inside me that would not open.

It's been over a year since I last used, and my foundation continues to grow. The Oakland County Alano Club is a part of me, and it's my second home. I'm glad I live close by; because whenever I have a meltdown I can be HOME in 5 minutes. I am building my life today and its happening one day at a time. I *act* better today (well...sometimes), and I *react* less. I'm learning to follow my Heart. When I feel good it's easy to enjoy the roller coaster ride, but I tend take my hands off of the safety bar and raise them high in the air. When fear comes I hang on tightly to my *recovery tools*, and do the next right thing as best I can.

When I was a teenager, *and studying hard to be an alcoholic*, a great lady told me that "Life is in the journey Jerry; not the destination." I had no idea how profound these words would become for me. And so my journey continues—*One day at a time*.

Jerry K.

Never turn back

After the storm
the peace is so great
like warm winter snow fallin midst the sun

Then Light fills your heart
with conviction so strong
once again on the path
Towards your dreams
Towards the light

so never turn back to darkness
or things that transport you back
to that place of complete living hell
and when it hurts just keep hanging on
and someday you will be well!

-- Jerry K

Words that hurt

You busted my heart
wide open with
words meant to hurt
to take away your pain.
And those words did hurt
and brought me to old pain
but within moments I became
free again
and now I hope
so much I pray
those words bring you
to a brand new day

-- Jerry K

My Life

My life started out as one of eight kids so you can imagine the sibling rivalry. I think that my low self esteem started there, I think that is one of my problems that contributed to my drinking. I was always competing to get what I wanted to be BETTER than my siblings.

My Grand parents on both sides were big drinkers, My older brother told me once that he remembers one of my Grandfathers drinking so much that he peid his pants then made his way to his bedroom and collasped on the bed till the next day to start all over again.

My parents never drank only on holidays but that did not seem to effect my thoughts of drink.

I think I was always predisposed to alcohol. I remember being young and having my Grandmother rubbing whiskey onto my gums to help with the pain of teeth coming in. Also the cough medicine she made with honey, whiskey and lemon. I found myself always at her house coughing asking for some more....

My first drinking binge happened when I was thirteen, it was 1976 at an open house for my brother,, I kept taking beers from the large container on the floor that had both ice, pop and beer in it. I took the beer and put it in a small cloth bag and then ran to a wooded area with my friends and drank it from there off to the races I went.

I started to drink not all the time but created a pattern, then drugs came into the picture. I "partied" all through my teens and early twenties . I started with beer then liquor came into my life and I was drinking more of that than beer and taking drugs. I managed to keep working all throughout, except when I would be laid off. I often changed my profession, maybe it was my relationships with my co-workers or employers that I had a problem with. I never even thought it could be my drug and drinking problem. Hanging out with other people who had " better" jobs than I so I thought enforced that feeling of inferiority and to the depths of depression I began to sink.

I then met my now wife and decided to quit the drugs altogether since she was not a drug user. The alcohol was adding and intensifying my problems but I just rolled with it thinking that, that was just the way I was.

I went years and years drinking on and off mostly on. Anytime I could find an excuse to drink I would. At home away from home on trips, special occasions.

I would have a few drinks for any occasion just to loosen up don't you know but then would end up making a fool of myself or having to leave early because I was too bombed.

I would drive the back roads drinking after work or when there was no work, then go home stop by the local store buying some beer and arriving home would pretend I just started to drink.. Yea like I was fooling somebody,, I thought.

After going off the road I could not believe the ambulance driver would even ask if I had been drinking that day. That was in 2001, at my hospital stay the Doctor's dianosed me with a life changing medical condition which sobered me up and brought me to GOD and Jesus for a few years.

Then I came to a point that I realized that I was going to live so I assumed my old life just to continue to slide further down,, drinking became more and more a bigger part of my life.

I would act like I was sick to avoid going to family get togethers just so I could stay home and get drunk. I sometimes could not wait for my wife to go shopping, encouraging her to go so I could get bombed.I would find myself voluntiering to go to the store to pick up things just so I could buy something to drink, or would make a suggestion to eat out and go pick it up. All for the underlying reason of getting something to drink for me. We would have parties and I would go buy alot of different liquors and beers saying to my wife that " Your brothers like this and that knowing all too well that I would be drinking it in the days to come.

I would mostly drink on Saturdays and Sundays,, maybe a couple of days during the week..... Then I would take a Friday off once in a while and have three day partying sessions.. That would sometimes turn into four days....

I slowly weaned myself off of liquor, and started to drink mostly beer. Then one day I was at the store buying a case, (for one day) and thought maybe I should get some vodka so I bought a half pint, boy that was the start of a downward spiral that I could not break. I started drinking less beer and more vodka for months.

I always tried to hide how much I was actually drinking. I would find different ways to pay for it,,, credit cards, atm, cash, take in some scrap metal, finding gas stations that sold gas and beer or liquor and put it all on one receipt , under " GAS", offer to have pizza for my family and then say I will go and pick it up,, so I could buy some more beer. yea I was smart,, so I thought. I was not fooling anyone but myself.

Work was getting tougher more strain more pain. I would cause problems then put in for other positions and self destruct either before the interview or my constant complaining would automatically take me out of the running so to speak and I would then still complain. Then I would blame it on someone or something else and drink to "feel" better,, yea right.

Well the day finally came, my work day was so bad that I ended up going on a drinking binge for three days. after waking up in my bed and wondering what I did I started going through my mind of all the wrong I had done.

I never wanted to ask for help ever!

After two days in bed I asked my wife to call the hospital so I could talk to someone, that was one of the best choices I have made in my life. That counselor recommended that I go to an A.A. meeting I waited three more days and finally worked up the courage, or weakness to go, thats when I found out that I was powerless over alcohol. what a relief. I thought I could do anything and everything by myself, I am so glad to have been directed to A.A.

I have been sober for 6 months now and am learning so much, I have a sponsor, I pray and read. I have new friends and make constant calls to my A.A. friends. I am very grateful for another chance at life..... Hey Its a blessing! hopefully I can stick with it and have a sober rest of my life.

As he begins to raise his voice
You lower yours and grant him one last choice
Drive until you lose the road
Or break with the ones you've followed
He will do one of two things
He will admit to everything
Or he'll say he's just not the same
And you begin to wonder why you came

Where did I go wrong, I lost a friend
Somewhere along in the bitterness
And I would have stayed up with you all night
Had I known how to save a life

-- "How To Save a Life", The Fray

Gossip

Secrets shared
in a noisy world
offended me,
so needy,
I wanted to be part of the talk
the gossip, the edge
that says to let me attach
to the silent sickness
of your secrets
so that then
I can tie you up with my own
and let you in my club
of private judgments, self-righteous filth

True, real love needs no secrets
it's open to all
but please don't tell me your *petty* secrets
Oh I'll listen and want to understand
but those little secrets, so small
please drop it from our talk.
Give me better: the real you.
And I too will do my best.
and then we can break free
and not be another member of the

"I got to say something too" club
-- Jerry K.

The new “kid” at the best gig in town

I was born into a struggling middle class family in Waterford Township. I am the middle of three sons. We lived in a small two-bedroom home where I shared a cramped room with my brothers. We attended church twice weekly. My father worked countless hours at Grand Trunk Railroad. He often worked more double or even triple shifts than singles. My mother stayed home with us kids. I’m not sure who had the harder job! Drinking played no part in my family’s life.

When I was ten years old, life changed dramatically. Waterford schools cut classes to half days. My parents decided it was time to move. My father, uncle and others built us a new home in a very rural section of Clarkston. It was four miles of dirt roads to the nearest store. Our entire family spent the spring and summer living in a twenty foot travel trailer parked on the construction site. We washed up at the nearby lake, going to Grandma’s a couple times a week for a real shower. My parents could no longer afford time for church, or much of anything else, if we were to move in before school started.

Making friends in the new neighborhood came easy, although we all came from the wrong side of the tracks. I enjoyed Waterford schools, but learned to despise Clarkston schools in very short order. Those with any privilege or standing came from, or near, the “village.” If you weren’t from “snobville,” you were nothing. If you couldn’t afford to have a designer’s label on the ass of your jeans, you were from the ghetto and belonged with the “burnouts.” Although school always came easy for me, I couldn’t stand to be there.

As the school years went on, I chose to earn the label I had been given. Drugs and booze were everywhere. I was no stranger to them. During seventh grade a friend suggested that we take these two tiny pills and skip school. The pill was LSD. I had never been high or drunk before. The intensity and duration of the high scared me to the point that I swore off drugs for life. Except for the occasional joint and prescribed meds, I have kept that promise. While many of my friends were using every narcotic they could find, I found a love for alcohol. Looking back, I believe I was an alcoholic from the start. I drank to get drunk. I could often be found passed out somewhere. I managed to graduate high school with a 3.0 GPA. I never failed a class, but was often to my limit in absences in every class. I then graduated from carpenter’s apprentice school.

During my teen years, my father took up the hobby of scuba diving. At fifteen years old, I joined him. We did more and saw more things than many people ever will. We made yearly trips to the Florida Keys with the guys in the dive club. I’ve caught lobster with my bare hands. I’ve been shipwreck diving, night diving, ice diving, etc. I even got my picture on the cover of Skindiver magazine during a night/ice dive. I should have considered myself lucky and enjoyed more of the time with my father, but once again, I thought as a child. I wanted to party with my friends instead of hanging with those “old” men.

It was also during these years that I saw my father drink for the first time. It didn’t take him long to become a full-fledged alcoholic. At first, he didn’t condone my drinking, but soon I was joining him. After all, I was almost at the legal drinking age (eighteen at the time). My father drank quite heavily for about a decade, then quit drinking and smoking on the same day. He stopped just as abruptly as he started. He has been sober for over twenty-five years. I always thought that if he could stop drinking cold turkey without help, so could I. I was wrong!

Immediately after high school, I became a union carpenter apprentice. Carpentry has been my career for over thirty years. It’s a job I’ve loved and excelled at.

At twenty years old, I married my high school sweetheart. At 23, I was a father. My daughter was, and still is, the light of my life. I’m very proud of her. She teaches elementary school and will soon earn her master’s degree. Her husband excels with a company that restores vintage cars from all over the world. After all I’ve put her and the rest of my family through, she still loves me and sticks by me. I

know it will take a long time to regain even close to the respect she once had for me. For that I am truly sorry and very ashamed.

After fifteen years of marriage, my wife asked me for a divorce. I was devastated! I left with only my clothes and tools, refusing to split up my daughter's home. Drinking played a major part of our split (mine and hers). We simply drifted apart. I chose to drink at home almost daily. She preferred to drink into oblivion on Friday and Saturday, then spend most of Sunday in bed.

I lived in an apartment for one year, then purchased my parent's home. I remarried on the rebound. The relationship lasted less than three years. I decided I didn't need the cost and maintenance of a house by myself, plus it got in the way of my drinking time. I sold the house and rented another apartment. I received a D.W.I. while moving. At least I had the equity from the house to pay fines, court costs, etc.

After one year in the apartment, I moved in with my new fiancé. Life was good for a while. Although she worried about the amount I drank, I'm not sure exactly how much she drank, but she would often join me. Kathy died of bladder cancer just a few months after diagnosis. At the time, I wished I would have died with her.

Watching Kathy get sicker by the day and then dying is by far the hardest thing I've had to go through in life. I used this experience to transform from a chronic alcoholic into a bottom-dweller drunk. I went from a pint of 101% liquor to a fifth or more daily.

I lost my job over a year prior to the economy, not drinking! Although it may have come to that eventually. I had all day to drink, which I wholly took advantage of. I moved into a spare room at my parent's house. They absolutely prohibited alcohol or smoking in their home. I would sneak it in or leave it in my truck to drink when I went outside for a smoke. I didn't care if I lived or died.

On October 20, 2010, I nearly did die. It's by the Grace of God that I'm here today. On October 18, 2010, I took my last drink. I consumed a quarter pint before I got out of bed. It was under my pillow from the night before. I drank continuously until I passed out that evening. I awoke the next day throwing up in a wastebasket. I knew if I could get some liquor in me, I would feel better, but every time I got the bottle close to my mouth, I would heave. And so it went that day and into the next. Experience told me that if I didn't get liquor into my system soon, I would have a withdrawal seizure. Yet instead of seeking help, I just laid in bed hoping I could get something down. How insane is that?

When the seizure came, my folks had their coats on, leaving for church. It must have been God himself that made my mom pass my door and hear me thrashing. They phoned 911 just in time to save my life. I remember nothing of the paramedics or the ambulance. When I awoke in the E.R., the doctor asked me where I was. I responded Macomb County Jail. I've never been in that building! I spent the next nine days in the hospital, nearly all of it confined to bed. I couldn't get to the bathroom, or even walk across the floor, alone. I was over thirty pounds underweight, very dehydrated, a very sick man.

When the doctor released me from the hospital, my 27-year old daughter was in the room. I allowed it. I wish I hadn't. I was not prepared for what the doctor told me. I'm sure she wasn't either. When he explained that my liver was $\frac{3}{4}$ shot, that I had less than a year to live if I ever drank again and that I would use again, she left the room in tears. When she returned, my parents were with her. It was clear they had been crying too.

Three days later, I was well enough to attend my first A.A. meeting. I went to well over 100 meetings in the first 90 days. If a person asks what it took to get me through the doors of A.A., I can't give a single answer. Was it God's intervention? Shame? Fear of dying? Self-will? (NOT). Or was it seeing those tears in my little girl's eyes? My guess is all of the above and more. If asked how I stay sober and why I attend meetings nearly every day, often twice, the answer is easy. I have the absolute desire to stay sober one day at a time. Even though I have lost the temptation to drink, I need the

support and fellowship of the folks who sit at the tables and the reassurance that God is here for us. I know that even when life sucks sometimes, I never have to be alone. The light at the end of the tunnel does not have to be an oncoming train.

In January 2011, I once again found myself in the hospital with a life threatening condition involving emergency surgery, blood transfusions, intensive care, over a foot of my colon left and a temporary colostomy. When I awoke from surgery, I had tubes and IVs everywhere. I was told that my colon had ruptured, spreading poison and infection throughout my body. My doctor said the tube from my side was to drain the huge abscess on my liver that may have been growing for years, possibly from birth. The good news is that once the growth is gone, my liver will be healthy and that alcohol had nothing to do with this episode.

While lying in that bed in more pain than I thought was possible, I began to curse God, asking him, "Why?" How many trials must I endure? Haven't I been through enough? If this had been the result of my drinking, I could understand, but this I could not! After much soul searching, prayer and meditation, I began to thank and praise God for sparing my life, for his love and for the strength to stay sober one day at a time.

Early this spring (2011), I had yet another surgery to reverse the colostomy from three months earlier. All went well. I was home four days later and I'm rapidly regaining my health. Although I still face many trials – I can't work, have no income, my pension board and social security are both dragging their feet – I can find sobriety, joy, peace and happiness through God, my family and my friends at A.A.

At the time of this writing, I've enjoyed seven months of continuous sobriety. If I continue to heed the words embossed on our coins, and it's God's will, I hope to have many more 24 hours of sobriety. I will start with this one.

I praise the day in my life that God introduced Jack Daniels to John 3:16.

Amen.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

You can't save your face and your ass at the same time.

If you have one foot in the past and one foot in tomorrow, you're pissing on today.

I have to live 23 hours a day outside of this room.

Religion is for people who don't want to go to hell. AA is for people who've been to hell and don't want to go back.

One drink is too much and 100 drinks are never enough

Let go and let God

First things first

Live and let live

One day at a time

Keep coming back

I came to believe

Don't quit before the miracle happens

Count your blessings

Alcoholism is incurable, progressive and fatal

To keep it, you have to give it away

A.A. is the highest priced club in the world

Trust God, clean house, help others

Just for today I will try to live through this day only

Live life on life's terms

Death, insanity or recovery

I didn't get in trouble every time I drank, but every time I got in trouble, I was drinking

Insanity is defined as doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results

Definition of insanity (Miriam-Webster) – insanity:

- 1) a **deranged state of the mind** usually occurring as a specific disorder (as schizophrenia)
- 2) such **unsoundness of mind** or lack of understanding as **prevents one from having the mental capacity** required by law to enter into a particular relationship, status, or transaction or as removes one from criminal or civil responsibility

Don't drink and go to meetings

I found God
On the corner of First and Amistad
Where the west
Was all but won
All alone
Smoking his last cigarette
I said, "Where you been?"
He said, "Ask anything".

Where were you
When everything was falling apart?
All my days
Were spent by the telephone
That never rang
And all I needed was a call
That never came
To the corner of First and Amistad

Lost and insecure
You found me, you found me
Lying on the floor
Surrounded, surrounded
Why'd you have to wait?
Where were you? Where were you?
Just a little late
You found me, you found me
-- "You Found Me", The Fray

THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR A.A. MEMBERSHIP IS THE DESIRE TO STOP DRINKING

So....

**We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had
become unmanageable.**

...and our recovery began.

Please contribute. We want to hear your story or thoughts!