

## Grapevine Online Exclusive

Published February 2012.

# Web Exclusive: Look at Your Toes

## His sponsor had a quick way of reminding him where he was in that moment

My first sponsor in AA had a foot fetish ... and I think he gave it to me. He kept telling me to look at my toes.

I remember going to him and talking about my marital difficulties. How my wife just didn't understand me. She wanted control of our money, only giving me a weekly allowance. Sometimes, on a daily allowance! She wouldn't let some of my friends in the house. She'd even tell them I wasn't there if they came to

the door and I was in the other room. She questioned me about missing overtime payments from my paycheck. She insisted on money going to the bank in the middle of the month for bills that weren't due until the first.

His response was, "Look at your toes."

I told him stories about work. My boss was a slave driver. My co-workers were all lazy slobbs leaving their work for me. The customers were unmanageable.

His response was, "Look at your toes."

He heard how my family had all but disowned me, except for my sister who



had Bible scripture covering all her windows to dissuade her local peeping tom. And she kept calling me Sunday morning at god-awful hours trying to get me to go to church with her.

His response was, "Look at your toes."

He heard me tell how half my old friends didn't want to even hear my voice on the telephone, the rest seemed to be okay. I had it planned where I could still go out and party with them, but be the designated drinker ... uh driver. Yeah driver.

His response was, "Look at your toes."

The people in AA were all phoney. They got in their little cliques and didn't talk to newcomers like me. I was sure most were lying about their sobriety dates. And if everything in AA is only "suggested," what was the problem with my not doing it?

His response was, "Look at your toes."

My sponsor, Howard, was a Lumbee Indian. He was about 6'4," 250 pounds and rode a motorcycle. I looked up to and respected Howard. I felt that he was superman almost ... he could do anything he wanted to do. My problem with that was, Howard had decided that I was going to get sober. And I was one of those drunks who inspired that saying, "when you come to AA, you learn the First Step, and when you sponsor someone in AA, you really learn the second part of the First Step.

When I was drinking, I had seen Howard around but then he had just disappeared. I thought he was in the pen, like others we partied with. Then he came by that Monday after work.

It was after the New Year--If he had come around a week earlier, we would have been out of town. As it was, he came by the day after we got back from our extended holiday vacation. We had left North Carolina to go back to Texas to see both our folks. I'd had some problems back around Thanksgiving due to my drinking. I had seen the light of day and decided to make a clean break of it all. I had actually been doing quite well. In Texas, I had even fairly gracefully bowed out of tasting my father-in-law's homemade wine and my mom's bourbon eggnog. So when some of my wife's friends invited us to a New Year's Even party, there was some discussion, but it wasn't too hard to convince my wife that I'd be on my best behavior.

The last thing I remember before I woke up in the corner of the living room was that it was ten o'clock in the evening. I often crashed on people's living room floors when I didn't want to drink and drive. This time, the place didn't look nearly as trashed as I remembered it the night before. Wondering if there was anyone around, I went to the kitchen. I asked the two folks in there if they knew where my wife was. Her name didn't ring a bell. But they said there was coffee by the sink. At the sink, I looked out the window. In the 16 years I had grown up in the Dallas area, I didn't remember ever seeing snow-covered mountains out anyone's kitchen window before.

It turned out that I was in Boulder, Colo. and it was January 3. I had to call my wife collect and then my mother in order to get money wired for a bus ticket to Dallas. My wife and I spent a difficult couple of days and 1200 miles driving from Colorado to North Carolina. After those two days, she still had not had enough time to tell me all her feelings about my escapade.

It was that Monday that Howard showed up after work. He'd hardly gotten in the door before he said, "We need to talk. Why don't we go somewhere?"

I didn't really know Howard that well, but the choice seemed to be spending some time with someone who drank like I did, or with an irate wife.

I rode on the back of Howard's bike. We just rode around about an hour or so in the dark. A motorcycle is not the best place to hold an extended conversation. We wound up at a little place out in the middle of the country. I just knew it was a roadhouse from the cars out front. Little did I know that it would be my first AA meeting.

For the next several years, I heard Howard ask, "Look at your toes. Where are they pointing? Toward sobriety? Or another drink?" Sometimes, I thought I knew. Other times, I learned to ask a taller AA who might be able to see a bit more of what might be over the horizon.

-- Anonymous

**This is a preview. To view the full article, use the link below to begin a free 7-day trial!**

**Try GV's 7 Day Free Trial**

SAMPLE ARTICLE

SAMPLE AUDIO

**Login** or **click here** to subscribe.

## **Related Items:**

### **Life is Good**

A member reflects on her 28th anniversary

### **Six Axioms of Alcoholic Thinking**

A member gives us a rundown in plain English

### **Self-Supporting**

A member discusses the spiritual significance of supporting ourselves

### **Salad and Humble Pie**

She was able to see her part in the argument