

Magazine

From the January 2012 magazine.

Life Underground

His life consisted of living and drinking in a sewer until he made it back to AA

After years of relapse and being homeless, I finally hit bottom. This I hope was to be my last physical bottom due to my alcoholism. I came to my home group starting in November 2005 for the coffee and doughnuts. Then my Higher Power did for me what I could not do for myself.

By late January 2006, I had moved into a sewer hole in the town in which I lived and drank. Two weeks later, I got a staph infection that put me in the hospital for almost a month. I thought that I had done Step One and I was on my way, until the desire to drink was stronger than my will to stay sober. So out the back door of the hospital I went—in my hospital gown. You might be thinking, "Where is he going like that?" If you are a drunk like me, for a drink!



I had no money, nor friends, but that was not a problem. I could go back to my safe place—the sewer hole. It was dark and cold but I had my booze and myself. For the first time in 39 years, I was alone and scared. I knew that the party was over, and I didn't know what to do, so I went back into the hospital and told on myself.

After I was discharged, I had nowhere else to go so I went back to the only place I knew, the sewer hole. I didn't drink, but for a week I couldn't do much else but cry, shake, and sleep. Then in early March, I sat up, looked towards the light entering from the outside world and had one true prayer. The prayer consisted of asking God to cure me or kill me. I cried myself to sleep and when I awoke, I went to an AA meeting and announced that I had less than 24 hours of sobriety. I was angry, scared and truly insane.

I was told by an old-timer to "keep coming back," so I did. I thought that she wanted me to come back because she wanted to tell me something. About a week later, I moved to the bench in front of the meeting room. I went to meetings day and night and when I was about 10 days sober, I got a sponsor. But more than that, I heard something that changed my life forever. It was in the "Big Book" within the chapter, A Vision for You: "The hideous four horseman— terror, bewilderment, frustration and despair, unhappy drinkers who read this will understand." I did.

I found it was not necessary to take another drink for any reason. When I had 45 days of sobriety, someone opened his home to me. He is the true spirit of the program. He has seen me at my worst and believed in me.

After my first year, I had my first sober, long-term relationship, but it was not to be. When I had 18 months,

my partner passed on and I got to do the unthinkable. I walked the last miles of his life and was there to hold his hand at the end. The Eleventh Step prayer was my solace, and my friends in Alcoholics Anonymous were there to help me stay sober.

Today, I know that there is a solution. I have a sponsor who has a sponsor; I sponsor other men; I work the Steps as they are outlined in the book and oh yes, service, lots of service.

Today, I am not alone like that night in the sewer hole and I am truly blessed with blessings more than I can count. I often walk past the sewer hole to remind me where I came from and where I could be again if I ever drink. The relationship I have formed with my Higher Power, who heard me on that day when I thought no one loved or cared, is making me the best man I can be.

-- Joey W.

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