

Grapevine Online Exclusive

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Web Exclusive: My Brother, My Keeper

A story of two brothers who helped each other get sober

In July 1981, after five years of daily drunkenness, I stumbled into AA. A small public service ad in our small town weekly newspaper told me where it met, and promised hope and help. I was adopted by an alcoholic bricklayer who led me through the Steps and introduced me to his Higher Power.

I immediately caught on to AA's program of recovery and thought I was ready for some Twelfth Step work at eight months sober. In February 1982, I contacted my

unemployed brother who had lived in Southern California for 25 years. He was broke at the time. I asked if he would like to return to Tennessee and go to work with me in my plumbing business.

I knew he had a bad drinking problem, and was near what I thought was a bottom. Buying a one way ticket to LA and boarding a flight for the very first time was quite an experience, but I was on a mission. I didn't have enough plane fare to get home. Arriving in L.A. International Airport was a big shock for a small town boy. My brother and his ex-wife met me and we headed for her house. They had both been drinking and were arguing as we flew down



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six lanes of freeway in a small compact car.

He had an older pickup, but it was in hock to his bartender. The next morning, after falling to sleep listening to the drinking and arguing, I awoke and asked my Higher Power for guidance. The Serenity Prayer was used many times on this trip. As he and I shared morning coffee, I told him about my newfound sobriety in AA.

He shocked me by telling me a previous employer had sent him to treatment. He said there was a meeting place nearby with around-the-clock meetings. I said I would like to go. His ex dropped us off at the door and went to make arrangements to retrieve his old truck. I think she wanted him out of California, too. We hung around for an hour or so, and as we walked back to her house, he bought a six-pack at a corner store.

I couldn't believe it. He was drinking on the way home from an AA meeting. When we got to the house she blew up. We hastily threw his clothes and my suitcase in the back of the truck and left heading east. At least, I hoped it was east. Somehow I drove that old truck through the maze of freeway traffic and was finally out of the city. He nursed the remainder of that six-pack, all afternoon. When we crossed into Arizona, he said that was it. He said he was through with drinking.

I poured what AA I had on him all the way across the country. We miraculously made it home, and because "I had to keep him sober" I had to attend many more meetings than I had before. He influenced me to attend my first AA Convention and we traveled outside my local area to attend other AA functions.

I drank again in 1983 for three months, and again in 1985 for one night. My sobriety date is June 6, 1985. But by the grace of a loving God and the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, my brother's sobriety date is still February 15, 1982. He hasn't had to drink since we crossed the Colorado River many years ago. He has had more to do with my sobriety, than I with his. I went deeper into AA service work than he did, but he made it possible. He opened an account at a local bank and regularly made small deposits, which I could draw on, to fund my travels and provide literature. He always worked behind the scenes and has never asked for or received credit until now. Most of what I have accomplished in AA over the years is due to my brother, my keeper.

-- Milton C.

Ripley, Tennessee

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