

Alcoholic Conspicuous

by Chance N. Matson



It is widely taught that alcohol has the capacities to destroy lives and families; I was able to experience this first hand. Most of my family was always drinking growing up but nothing extreme ever happened until my step dad came into the picture. Being raised by a single mother, I was quite happy that she met someone who made her happy and seemed to be an all around good guy. I held (and still do) more love for him than my real father but his addiction to alcohol would destroy a family that we established over six years. In my opinion, it was not handled in the right way but it was the only way possible at the time.

He was and is really a good person though, so don't get me wrong. This is not one of those stories about an abusive step parent and the horrors of home life. This is more a story of tragedy at alcohol's hands. In the early years, it was not much of a problem, but the first road block occurred at year three. When drunk, he would become paranoid and irratio-

nal. One night, when we lived in San Diego, California, my mother came home after spending some time with my grandfather and my step dad. My step dad, in a fit of influenced rage, yelled in jealousy OF HER FATHER! This illogical reason for fury led to a large fight that ended in temporarily separating the family. They ended up reconciling though and remaining together.

At about year four we moved to Lewiston, Idaho. This is where alcohol directly, not inadvertently such as the first incident, ended the relationship. In an effort to reform, he attended Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and tried to cut down slowly as to avoid withdrawal symptoms. I discovered one day while looking through the closet, two hidden alcoholic beverages. He was hiding extra ones from my mother. I was not sure what to do and I did not want to be directly involved in any fight (a mistake on my part) so I kept it to myself. Mom eventually found out. This deceitful act, coupled with the constant inquiring for alcoholic purchase and unemployment due to drunken laziness, led to the eventual breakup. It was made even worse when, in a drunken daze, he fell outside the house and broke his foot. Mom tried to be kind and help him until he healed but, being numb from liquor, he continued to stand up on his wrappings and cause his foot to bleed through them. Mom was forced to throw him out. He was placed on a plane back to San Diego where he could stay with some friends of his.

The whole situation put a great deal of stress on me. I was particularly tired of hearing the incessant fighting. I also learned not to lend money to people, for in the end he owed me more than sixty dollars that I knew about. I say that I knew about because

I found one day that I was missing a large number of coins from my coin collection. They were not ever meant for spending, but for posterity. Mom was struggling with a minimum wage job and he continued to steal money from her as well to feed his addiction. We were already living in subsidized housing so this was a massive immoral act in itself.

I want it understood that regardless of so many things, I do love him and I still call him dad. I understand the power of addiction. Never-the-less, this could not save him from the consequences of these heinous actions. If someone spends all day doing nothing productive, lacking an occupation, stealing money from the people who live with them, and using that money to buy a substance that will put them in an extremely volatile state, does it not make sense to expel that person from the house? It was the only option that Mom had. She had given him innumerable second chances to change his ways and he wasted all of them. The reason I say it was handled incorrectly is because I believe Mom should not have been so lenient with him and expelled him before so much damage was done. Nobody is so good as to deserve twelve chances at redemption. Alcohol controlled my step dad and led to his banishment from the first stable close family in my life. I feel I learned from the experience, though, as I intend to keep in mind where to draw the line with people in the future before they have so large of a negative effect on my life. It is divine to help people, especially those you love, but only to a limited extent.

The editors and staff of Alert would like to congratulate Chance on his winning essay and to encourage him to pursue his academic career.

We would also like to encourage this years seniors to enter our essay contest.
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