



My Dad

By Cori Clark

MY FATHER WAS THE ONE WITH THE drinking problem in my life. For as long as I can remember, drinking was all he wanted to do, it completely overtook his life. When I was four he went to alcohol treatment and stayed sober for five years. Although I don't remember much of the time, I do remember being together more as a family, and there wasn't as much of a strain on our home life. When I was nine, he started drinking again. This time the addiction was worse, it seemed as though he wanted to drink more and more and push my mom, sister, and I farther and farther away. It was like no matter what we said or did, it wouldn't get through to him, he just didn't want to bring us that close.

When I was ten he went to treatment again. This time the center was in Canton, South Dakota. This is said to be one of the best treatment centers in the state. While there he seemed to be getting better, getting the color back in his face, being happier, and talking about the things that bothered him. The staff there was so helpful for the required month that he was there. My mom, sister, and I went to visit every weekend. It was so good to see him happy to see us, his arms welcoming us with hugs as we met at

the door. When the month was up, dad was able to come home. It was Valentine's Day.

On our way home we went to Chuckie Cheese's and I cannot tell you how happy I was to have my dad back home with me. You could say I was a daddy's girl, no matter what the circumstances were. A month had passed, filled with Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and a very kind sponsor, Frank. Or so we thought. It turned out dad had never really quit drinking—he went right back to it, leaving my family and I in the dark. The addiction was the worst it had ever been. It was scary to watch him fade away with his substance of choice. He continued to drink for a year and a half.

Please understand that my father was an angry drunk. The kind no one wants to be around. Although he never laid a hand on any of us, the yelling was unbearable. I tried not to cry and remain strong for my little sister who was only six at the time. After my mom and dad fought over his drinking problem, my mom, sister, and I would leave and go drive around town for awhile and wait for him to pass out. Every time we had to do this I remember wondering if any of my friends had to do this. I never asked any of them though because I never talked about it, I was too afraid. Another year and a half wore on in this same manner. Every night he would drink a twelve pack of Keystone Light in the basement, as far away from everybody as he could get.

Fall turned to winter, winter turned to spring, and the next thing we knew summer was here—July 24th to be exact. It was a very hot, sticky, summer day. The kind everyone enjoys. My dad had been acting strange all day, talking to the neighbors, cleaning out the garage, taking care of yard work. My mom and I had thought something was up but we didn't dare to ask, we didn't want to start a fight. Night fell, and he had asked my mom and a few friends to go downtown with him. He ended up getting in a bar fight and broke someone's nose. He was

kicked out and started walking home. In the meantime my mom had come home to get my sister and me because dad was getting really angry and she didn't want us to see that. We stayed the night at a very dear friend's house. I went to bed feeling like something was not right.

It was eight o'clock in the morning of July 25, 2004 and we went home. We came home to find out that my dad had killed himself at about 4 o'clock that morning. His disease had overtaken his body so much, and depressed him to a point that he had to leave the three of us behind, with so many questions gone unanswered.

It has been five years, 2 months and 17 days since that day. Was everything handled in the correct way? No. But it was handled the way it was supposed to be. That was the day that everything was meant to start over for my family. The journey we have been through as a family has been so... hard, yet rewarding at the same time. It has brought the three of us so close together, we have seen each other at our worst, and at our best, but we don't dare run away from that. Family is the best thing you can ever have. Don't throw it away; they are there for you no matter what.

I still think about my dad everyday; the good and the bad. Everything about his life has helped shape my life. From him having an incurable disease, I learned that you should always try your hardest. No matter what the situation, you should always make sure you are happy. If you aren't, find a way to make it better. Talk about your feelings, don't bottle them up or someday you will burst. But most of all, family is the most important thing in life, don't walk away from them, they love you no matter what. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

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