

FRED

I was born in 1959 in Red Deer. My father was involved in the oil industry. After about six years my family started to travel extensively. I lived all over the world. Edmonton, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Norway, Trinidad, Spain, Thailand and India are some of the places where I have lived. My parent's home base, however, was always Red Deer.

I had been in twenty- seven different schools by the time I had reached grade ten. This was difficult for me, since I was not able to make any long term friends in my youth. I spent much of my time in culture shock from various moves.

I started drinking alcohol at five or six by taking a few sips out of the bottle. My father died an alcoholic. Early in my teen years I started to drink with my friends on Friday and Saturday nights. At the age of eighteen I went to work on the rigs in Fort Nelson B.C. I was there for four years. This was the late 70's and early 80's. Business was booming. I drank quite a bit because it was part of the culture. If you didn't drink you didn't work there. You were moved along. Drinking was part of work. Everyone drank after work and on their days off. This had a major effect on work performance. Individuals were not full with it when they were working. There were many accidents. I look back at this time and shake my head.

After my experience in the oil industry I became involved in the sandblasting and painting industry. I owned my own company in Edson for three years. This is where my alcoholism started to become a big problem. My lifestyle did not change from when I was on the rig's, I was dedicated to my job and family but I was drinking every day after work and was out of control. For instance there were days when I would not come home for dinner. I would drink until 9:00 or so and then go to sleep. I felt I had to drink after work for a number of reasons but I was not willing to address these concerns, then the economy took a downward turn and I went bankrupt. This had a major effect on y life but I continued to drink.

During this time I got picked up for impaired driving. I was forced to see a counselor at AADAC in Edson. I went there and spoke about my dad. The counselor made me look at myself but I was not ready to listen. I was twenty-five years old then and reluctant to admit I had a drinking problem. I just shrugged it off. I left Edson to move to Red Deer to be closer to my parents. I hadn't seen them much in the last few years.

I bought a painting business and went to work in Red Deer. I did rather well. I did not quit drinking but I tried not to drink as much. Three years later my mom died of cancer at the age of fifty-one. Nine months after that my dad died of a heart attack. This was a very sad time. To complicate matters I was stuck with both funeral bills. The pressure was tough, the economy was not very good and I got drunk. My crutch was back. I felt I had to leave Red Deer. My wife, who is an accountant, found work in Edmonton so we moved.

We stayed in Edmonton for awhile. I worked again in the painting industry. The next year we bought acreage in Gibbons. We were supposed to move into this home in June. Bu then a chain of events occurred which, today, is still hard to believe. I started drinking.

Before we were to move into our new home my wife and I went out one evening, We left our son, who was only a few months old, with a babysitter. We came back that evening to find our son dead. As we has suspected at the time, the babysitter would be accused of killing our son.

The babysitter was formally charged but the court case dragged out for two years. The case received a lot of press in Alberta, which made things more difficult. To my surprise and horror the babysitter was acquitted. I was shocked and devastated. I could not determine how any reasonable system would not find justice for my son and my family. To my family and me it was clear that the babysitter was responsible for my son's death. Within eighteen months I had lost my two parents and my son. My grief, the court costs and the funerals led me to bankruptcy. I started drinking more ...again.

One night during the trial my friend came over. It was on my son's birthday. We started talking about the court case, which upset me and made me angry. I thought the media blew things way out of proportion and were not fair in their reporting of the trial. I believed in the babysitter's guilt but I also believed that she would not be convicted of my son's murder. I hadn't had a drink in six months because I was scared my anger would get the better of me. I sat and had four or five beer with my friend, He then left. I became very angry. In fact, I was fuming. I went downtown to continue drinking. I became so angry I "lost it". I got into my truck to go find the babysitter. The police chased me as I raced through town. Eventually I racked up my truck. I landed in jail. The press soon found out who I was and the circumstances of my accident, this made the front page. I did not receive bail. I had to go to the babysitter's trial with handcuffs and coveralls. I couldn't be there to support my wife. They must have thought I was a danger to others. Perhaps I was. I was in the remand center for six months.

In jail I was diagnosed with depression syndrome. Through talking to my psychologist I found out how angry I was. I couldn't even look her in the eye when we spoke. I had to understand that my anger and resentment drove my drinking. In order to recover I knew I had to work through this. I had to talk about it.

Eventually I went back to court. The legal system decided to let me out of jail on the condition that I attend Our House Addiction Recovery Centre while I awaited my trial. This step allowed me to have a good look at my drinking. I felt guilty for moving my family to Edmonton. I blamed myself for the problems I might have caused by this move. I also felt guilty about my son's death. Could I have been partly responsible as well? I realized that I was using alcohol as a crutch. When times would get tough I would drink. Drinking was an escape. It prevented me from looking realistically at things. It was causing problems for me and for my family and, in this case it had been a major part of causing this big problem.

I served nine months out of two years. I got out of jail in 1996. My driving license was taken away. I am still on parole.

Today I don't worry hat people think about me. In the past I tried to make impressions. I wanted everyone to like me. But now it doesn't matter anymore. I am who I am. In February I started a new job and let other employees know that I am a recovering alcoholic. They seem to accept it and do not push me to drink. I have nothing to prove to others. When I don't drink my mind is

clear. When my mind is clear and I don't have to explain my son's death or my actions surrounding the trial, I believe I can live life as a quality citizen again.

I have a strong marriage now. My wife trusts me. If I'm not home for supper she knows I'm working and not in the bar. I do many things with my kids now. When I was drinking I stayed out late, and was tired, so I never paid much attention to them. My patience and attitude are much better. I want my kids to know more than what my dad taught me, because he taught me nothing except how to drink. My wife rebuilt our home. It took a lot of work but we quickly regrouped and recovered our losses. We progressed from bankruptcy to purchasing a lovely home and new vehicle in two years. My children and I are lucky to have her with us.

After December 23, 1993, I never had a drink again. The support I received through Our House assisted me greatly. I never had support before or thought anybody would care about me until I was introduced to Our House. They continue to provide me with support and I am grateful. I would be so mad at myself if I relapsed because I have done so much work and come so far. I feel I have dealt with the tragedy in my life and am ready to face further difficult times. I have bounced back and am living in peace again.

I would like to thank Our House Addiction Recovery Centre for their time and support and especially for what they did for me in 1993. I knew I wanted to recover but I didn't know how to do it. They showed me how to recover and I sure appreciate it. I feel stronger now than ever.