

Growing up in sunny southern California I was footloose and fancy free. Being raised in the 70s, teen culture was everything to me and my friends. High school came fast... but the school part of the equation was few and far between. I was more interested in surfing, women, drinking and doing everything (I) wanted to do regardless of the consequences.

My parents did their best to put me back on track but I was stubborn and trapped in my own reality, clutched in the grasp of simple self-seeking pleasures...

I was a solid student with better than average grades when I applied myself, but it was a waste of time for me. Life was for the moment, my future was the last thing on my mind. Soon came this huge wall called reality, and I plowed into it head on, laughing like I knew it all. With my grades and lack of make-up available, my senior year turned into a tail spin I couldn't control. I wouldn't make it to graduation with my peers no matter what I could do. I made the decision to get a job in construction. I would show them all that I'm a man and can still make it on my own.

A couple years pasted and friendships waned. I got my GED, but drinking and drugs continued to dull my senses, BUT kept me in my fantasy land.

I had been working with an old timer craftsman that was skilled in all types of construction. From plumbing and electrical, to concrete, framing and finish work, I found something I liked to do, and did it fairly well.

I visited a friend in Lake Tahoe. Self-indulgence came back out of the closet there at full speed. Thought I found true love. Quit my S. Cal job, and found work building home foundations in Tahoe. Life was good.

Winter was on the way and even back then I knew I couldn't do construction in, nor eat snow. Off to Oregon I went with a girlfriend in tow. After some false hopes and no work there, I contacted my parents and made my way home to S. Cal with my tail between my legs. I soon got a job at a hospital, and worked my way up to working as a patient care attendant in the Cat Scan department, developing film and moving patients.

After seeing some of my friends bringing in patients to the hospital emergency room as paramedics, I thought I'd give that a go.

I bypassed the short course and took the longer course at UCLA.

Well, I feel in love with pre hospital care. I ate it up. Passed with straight „A's" and even passed the much harder national registry exam shortly thereafter (so I could work as an EMT anywhere in the country)...

I landed a job with a company that was the medical provider for the city of Glendale, CA. We were also the next up responding agency in both Los Angeles City and Los Angeles County and rolls often with their perspective fire departments. It didn't take long to gain experience in that neck of the woods...

I was still a party animal, that part of my life did not change, especially with access to a good wage and an unsought of nurses, therapists and time off. Yes, it was a perk of the job, I figured, and acted accordingly.

About eight years into that my father started getting ill. He was only 50 years old and stubborn as all could be He didn't tell our family much about his problems. I recall personally having a stretcher there from my ambulance trying to coax him onto it and into the hospital. He refused. He knew more about his fate than we knew.

At this time period I finally got admitted to the prestigious Daniel Freidman Hospital paramedic program, one of the most distinguished schools in the country. My math skills were sub par, but I finally made it. Everyone was proud.

I was going to put my job on hold for the rigorous training.

A couple weeks pass and I got a call from my mom stating that my dad was going into the hospital for an exam. I went and visited him before the exam and joked with him a tad.

That was the last time I ever spoke with him.

I had gotten a call stating that something went wrong during the test. I rushed to the hospital to get there before my mom, and brother.

A nurse led me into his ICU room... Instantly I knew... I knew he had minutes to live. His body was in trendelenberg position, which means his feet and lower body were elevated so his heart didn't have to work as hard. He was intubated with a machine breathing for him. It was the toughest thing in the world to see, especially because of my medical history, and my lack of control over the situation. The nurses would not say one single word to what, why, or how he got to that state. I was furious. They threatened to have me forcibly removed from the hospital.

The only thing that calmed me down was the fact that I had to leave the room and intercept my mom before she saw my dad in the state.

I remember the conversation as if it were yesterday...

„Mom I said, dad is in there and he's not doing very well at all. He looks like crap and you may not want to see him this way, but on the other hand it may be the last time you will ever see him alive..." That was the second toughest thing I ever had to do... Saving peoples lives was what I did..., I was a paid comforter... but I felt so very alone.

We revisited my father for the last time...

The funeral was a few days later. My brother (a LA County Deputy) and I both wore our uniforms to the service...

I dropped out of medic school and took some time off with my mom (whom I moved back in with.) Alcohol numbed us both but did nothing for the pain and frustration...

A year or so later my mom told me that she wanted to move up to the Gig Harbor, WA area, a plan her and my dad had in the works.

During that time I did nothing but party... Drugs, alcohol and women was my life. Being prevalent or hip in the early 80s was no longer an excuse but an addiction.

I decided to move my my mom to Washington and hang out with her.

That trip probably saved my life...

After at least another year of acclimating to the new state I finally got around to actually wanting to get a real job.

I had an interview to become a gas piper for an air conditioning company and was actually going to be getting a lot more than my old EMT job.

Well, I actually got the job at the interview. My past construction history made me very qualified. The owner shook my hand at the office exit and said he looked forward to me starting the next day. I took one step down their stairs to leave, slipped on the moss and ended up on my butt at the bottom level.

I was hurt, really hurt. Needless to say, I didn't work for them the next day, or ever.

Went to a doctor and found out that I herniated a disc in my lower back. Into physical therapy I went... Months went by, bottles of pain pills piled up along with my bills. I was miserable (again).

The air condition company torn their deck down and played dumb. I hired an attorney. My brother had moved up shortly after and got a job with Tacoma PD. He took pictures of the deck before they removed it...

I went back to school, community college, on a mission to make up lost time – a vengeance on past indulgence. Straight „A's" followed.

I wanted to become a writer... It wasn't easy. I met a newspaper photographer that said if I could shoot pictures and write that I'd have a better chance of getting a job when I was done with school.

Awards followed. I won stuff left and right, but I didn't care... I was locked into something that was fun and challenging, similar to EMT school, I lapped it up.

School editors and advisors gave me a tough time about my writing. It just egged me on.

I began freelancing as a photojournalist at weekly newspapers, especially one, the Peninsula Gateway. I was relentless, I wanted a job and the editor knew it... I had to hang lower and climb higher to get different pictures... This was a young man's job not some one in his early 30s..., so they thought.

Years past along with almost every award imaginable.

I was a staple in the community. I became an EMT firefighter with Gig Harbor Fire and a few years later became a lieutenant in charge of eight other fire fighters, a fire engine and a water tender.

I began to write for the newspaper with more frequency, learning as I went. Eventually those accolades soon followed as well, winning awards in everything from sports and features, to hard news writing.

I did have the good fortune of running into my old english teacher at a store once, and thanked her for her encouragement. If not for her I would have heeded the advice from past school editors and advisors and never written another story.

I also made certain my journalism advisor did get to peek at my „non-school" first place written story awards.

However, awards are only as good as the following shot or your next story and there were plenty more of them both ahead. Actually years more...

I married my lovely wife Tammy and acquired two step children at the same time... Brittainy was eight and Buddy was four ... That took some getting used to for the footloose guy I was. Settling down really is a great descriptor.

Eventually bought a starter rambler home in Gig Harbor. About the same time I started shooting more and more weddings. I wasn't too wild about the non-news photography, but took it on as a challenge.

My efficiency with writing and doing most journalistic endeavors just got me busier. I figured that someone would notice and I'd get a break and make it to the daily papers with a bigger salary.

Years passed and bills went up. My bicycle hobby turned to fitness spinning classes and bicycle racing. It was my new high...

No more drugs and just the social drinking norm of all the rest... But my social was like everything else I did in life –110 percent. Every time I took a sip I thought of my father who ended up (I later found out) passing away due to complication from drinking...

I was in a rut again... I was better than average at work, and considered myself less than average at being a dad and husband. I decided to start my own business.

Each six-hour wedding was like a months pay, minus 60- some odd hours of working.

All I had to do was find someone that believed in me to get me a loan to tide me over to the bridal season. My credit was getting better, but was average at best.

One fine day, a banker gentleman by the name of Dennis listened to me ramble about how I planned to make it big and pay off all my bills etc... He actually trusted me... I walked out of the bank, called my wife, then call my work and gave them notice that I was leaving my beloved photojournalism position and that I was going into business my myself..

Looking back, it was a great move, silly how I didn't really save or plan for failure, but not surprising that I did it...

Seven some years later, the business is strong and getting stronger.

I stopped drinking for a six years, started again for a year, and now back on the wagon going on a year. This time will be different. I dedicated my sobriety to my father, myself, and then to my other father.

Met a friend by the name of Ken that got me playing guitar again. I wrote and recorded many songs, most of them being very spiritual in nature. One day Ken invited me to his church.

What a day that was. I gave my heart and soul to Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior shortly thereafter.

My business and family is still doing well, I'm active on my bicycle, and have no urge for drink whatsoever, plus I get to help people with my freelance writing with newspaper stories.

Life is good. Praise God, my father has found me and I'm at peace!