

Bobby Joe R.

Third Time's a Charm!

by Bobby Joe R.

I grew up in Aurora in the 60's in a poor family. I was the youngest of 5. I was in Special Ed because I had severe dyslexia. Back then they didn't really know what to do with us so I didn't get a lot of help. As a result, now I can read and write at a 4th grade level.

I started working when I was 14... painting. I tried a variety of handyman-type jobs thru my teens but I always came back to painting. I also started drinking in my teens and smoking pot. I quickly graduated to harder drugs. In my 20's I moved out of my family's home. I lived with various roommates. All we did was drink and drug. I painted to make ends meet but my mind was more into getting high. That cocaine got a hold of me and that was the devil itself. In fact, at one point I had \$10k in the bank and I smoked and drank it up in 2 months.

The first time I came to step 13 was 2000. I was down on my luck, fresh out of jail for DUI's and wanting to change my life. I stayed almost 2 years. I thought I could handle the world but I moved out and quickly learned I couldn't. I went back to the same old thing... partying and drinking. So then I went to the another program. Did their program. Graduated. Thought I had a handle on it again. But I fell right back into it. My mom and dad passed away within a month of each other and I used that as an excuse to drink and drug.

Not knowing exactly what to do, I called Shelly at Step 13 and I talked to her. I had some things going for me.... a vehicle... I wasn't in jail. She said get in here, there's a bed for you. And this time around I learned not to make excuses... not to try to come up with excuses to drink and drug. The support that they give you around here... you have to ask for it... but it's always there. I've learned to talk openly and express my feelings before they start bothering me. And I do NA and AA meetings.

I just moved to our new apartment building. It's just another step in becoming an active part of the community as well as staying away from the wrong people, places and things. It helps me keep a positive outlook on life because I'm around other graduates of Step 13... other alcoholics and addicts currently in recovery. I need to be around them because just like AA says, you have to be around your own kind because they've been there, done that, so you can openly talk. They know what's going on in your mind.

My apartment gives me more freedom to spread my wings. I can either fall on my face or do good. That's where the other alumni come in. They're always around and if you start messing up they'll point it out. I think this time I have a good grip. But with the fellowship the apartments still provide I think I'll be better off than out completely on my own. At the apartments everybody watches everybody. It's just another stepping stone to maintaining in the real world.

Being sober has given me a lot of things. I get to see my son. And being in the apartments he can come stay with me. I have to give credit where credit is do... to Step 13. They've opened the door for me more than once. I honestly don't think I'd be here today if they hadn't. That's the honest truth. I don't think I'd be alive.

Almost every painter I've worked with is an alcoholic. It feels good to be the sober one now.