

Interesting look inside the life and mind of an alcoholic. Must read for anyone whose life has been touched by alcoholism.

- (Review on barnesandnoble.com,) 

"I'm your neighbor. That's what compelled me to share this story. Most of us don't drift along fringes of the community but actually drive it.

I'm not the outdated stereotype Americans pin to Alcoholics. I'm the quiet neighbor with the polite kids... the neighbor who keeps his lawn mowed and his home kept up. I'm a man of many desks in a long and successful career. Not blue collar, but not blueblood either. I have two degrees. I had one wife for most of my adult life. I'm the respected community leader, even if I don't always lead the opinions in my own house. I'm behind you in church on Sunday morning and in the foursome in front of you at the course Sunday afternoon. You see, I was always the Early Bird Who Gets The Worm. Now I was about to find out What the Early Worm Gets.

Alcohol and the trouble I landed in were not in my plans. Nor is jail or treatment a right of passage for my family or my neighborhood. So perhaps my story and my perspective on the difference between Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism have an angle you can use. I drank and drove.

A six-week span that altered and nearly ended my life began December 15, 2007..

Shortly after 4 a.m.

I am up. Never confuse waking up with coming to. I came to a bit earlier than usual. I'm almost always up by 5 a.m. The early bird gets the worm and all, so I'm not unused to seeing this side of the sunrise.

Today's different. I didn't sleep well because the small circular fan my wife of seven months uses as white noise wasn't running. I'd become accustomed to the white noise so I missed it. It wasn't there because she wasn't there. She was at her boyfriend's and didn't come home. She's pissed. And cheating. Bad combo. It's easy to see why with all the drinking I was doing. Accepting that doesn't make it hurt

me any less. There would be no wake-up sex in this house today. No make-up sex either. Not this time. The drinking and driving arrest I got two afternoons ago no doubt was her last straw. Despite pulling off what appeared to outsiders as a somewhat successful career in the mutual fund industry, I was swimming in two liters of Jack Daniel's daily. Every day, beginning when the early birds rise.

She's not here. I'm still drunk. Neither thing was going to change today.

I took the pint and made my way to the home office down the hall. That's where I kept my laptop, naturally, but also another valuable piece of equipment: A breath-alcohol meter. I booted up the laptop and remember the reading I got while waiting for my Gateway. The reading was .151 I recall because the date was also the 15th and I thought that ironic. I took a huge slug of the whiskey to stave off the horrific shakes I get around .10, which was the reason I bought the meter, to stay ahead of withdrawal.

I knew I had to slam a little more to keep from shaking to pieces as I tried to type in my password and I was sobering. It was like typing wearing a catcher's mitt. I could feel it. And I had a conference call with an East Coast fund manager this morning, so I had to ramp up the Blood Alcohol Concentration to avoid being distracted during the call.

In my calendar I see that I have an open ticket on Midwest Airlines. A headful of whiskey before 5 a.m. told me it would be a good idea to use the ticket. Today. My keys were gone. Same place as my wife. My wallet, too. But I had the open ticket and a limo service that would drop me off at the airport as I've done dozens of times for work.

My closest friend in Phoenix told me to come down when she found out about the arrest Wednesday. I needed to get out of here and wanted so badly to get help. At least I was straight with myself about that. I had enough. I just wanted to be in treatment there. Two liters of booze day in and day out had me beaten up pretty well.

The flight was at noon. The car would pick me up at 10ish which was perfect because I knew it would be a car with a full bar and by 10 I'd be out of my stashed liquor and panicky. Perfect. No need to sober up at 30,000 feet.

I rocked the conference call which was, more or less, an audition for some speaking engagements I needed so desperately. I haven't worked in awhile. I had a belly full of confidence after that call, plus I was pleased to be leaving Wisconsin December for Phoenix sunshine. That made pumping out a few extra emails really easy. More work-related emails, since the fund industry was starting to show the strain that would lead up to the crisis of 2007-2008.

It was a sign, one that I was good at minimizing, that the alcohol was beating me because I was just buzzing when I was typing out such important emails. Just like every day, though, I had to drink. It should also have been a sign two days ago that my BAC was a .312 and I didn't even feel buzzed when the police pulled me over. I even passed two of the roadside sobriety tests at that level. I failed the nystagmus gaze test, which you won't pass intoxicated no matter how high your tolerance is. It should have been a sign that I drank the limo's whole pint of whiskey in the 30 minute drive to the airport. On top of that, I found a hidden liter in a long-forgotten hiding spot and put that in my briefcase. It should have been a sign that I came to in a local hospital a couple hours later after airport security couldn't rouse me for final boarding. I was at .612. Should have been a sign, but I was so angry about missing my flight, that I stood up, checked out against medical advice and tried to get the next flight. My BAC was barely under .50 . I walked out under my own power.

My wife was not running to get me after this caper either. I never made the flight. If I just would have made it to Arizona and rehab that day.

If I just would have made that flight.

Nietzsche said, "When you look into the abyss, the abyss looks into you." Well, I peeked into the abyss that day and stared back defiantly. Dumbass. I wasn't at my bottom yet: Worse was still ahead in the next couple weeks.

What lied ahead was an education in the differences between Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse and the differences between treatment and mistreatment. And what the early worm gets."