

After 25 years he quits alcohol

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One of an estimated 20 million alcoholics, Jim began at an early age to use alcohol to overcome any sense of inadequacy, to become more sociable and affable and to gain pleasure in a life that had seen too much pain.

The son of an alcoholic father, he began drinking in high school — two jumbo beers on Friday nights with friends, then off to Edgewater Park for an evening of camaraderie, boisterous conversations, pranks, jokes, laughs and amusement.

Drinking was at first a means of enjoying himself, then a friend who could be counted on to assist in a variety of situations, then a constant habit.

There was never any question in young Jim's mind that he would drink, despite the harsh example of his father who regularly tyrannized the house.

He didn't even think about the prospect of becoming an alcoholic. But, as he reflects now, his story is typical.

"It begins with pleasure," he said. "Alcoholics want and expect more pleasure than the average individual and they are people who, in the beginning have fun drinking. They are people who can drink; they can drink more and suffer less than the average."

"After a while, the alcoholic obtains pleasure but still needs more alcohol. Alcoholics use the drinking to handle their problems; they take a drink when they are depressed, nervous, tense, edgy, uncertain,

whatever. It becomes their way of dealing with life."

So it goes, for most alcoholics — the increasingly more painful journey from drinking for pleasure to uncontrolled drinking.

At 21 he married his high school sweetheart. She asked him not to drink too much on their wedding day. "I didn't, but it shows how much I used to drink, even then."

Jim was away from home in the evening because he worked in the evening. But this also gave him the opportunity to drink in bars at night.

He drank with co-workers and alone. He drank for laughs and for good-times. He started drinking to get over depressions and frustrations. More and more, the bars became his life: the conversations, the laughs, the gambling, the flirting with girls in the bars.

JIM FINALLY hit his bottom. Drinking every day and doing nothing else, he got to the point where "I knew I was going to die. At this point he was admitted to Brighton."

Jim attended AA meetings after he was released from Brighton. The alternatives to AA, and sobriety, longtime members say, are two: insanity and death.

Today he sums up how he feels about the difference between his former life and his "born again" self.

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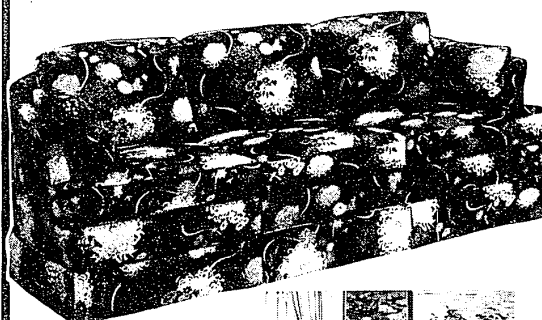
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