

I was born in New York and enjoyed a wonderful childhood in Cleveland, Ohio. After we moved to Richmond, Virginia when I was eight, I continued to thrive in the joy of being a kid for the next five years. My mother died of pancreatic cancer a week after my 13th birthday. Life would never be the same.

Immediately, I was on an emotional rollercoaster with no end in sight. My grades in school began falling and my associations there changed from one group to another. Marijuana was introduced to me at this time and I had already begun drinking from my father's liquor cabinet at home. Soon I found the leftover pain pills from my mother's years of sickness. There was no turning back.

The next thirty years were spent in the grip of addiction. My life was not completely bleak though, as I have two wonderful children, who are the joy of my life. In the end it was prison that ironically saved my life and put a halt to the abusive lifestyle I was living before I harmed myself even further or accidentally harmed someone else. I was incarcerated for having received three DUI's within a ten year period.

Before prison, I had been in the hospital more times than I can count for alcohol and drug abuse. Some of those visits found me literally at death's bed in ICU units. But, it was my three years in prison that cleansed my soul. My hospital stays had been brief, a week or two, then it would be off to the races again. It wasn't until a year had gone by that I really began to notice a difference. At two years, I felt even better, and was growing spiritually. After three years, I felt like a new man. At three and a half years I was released to begin a new life

My poem, "Rite of Passage," was written for my fiancée's brother, a childhood friend. She and I helped him get into recovery three years ago and at the onset he was hospitalized for some time. I wrote it for him during that time to help him understand that I knew what he was going through, that I had been there too, and that I cared.