



Recovery Story

Betty Currier

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I'm Betty Currier and I'm in long-term recovery from alcoholism. I haven't needed a drink to change how I think, feel or act since January 6, 1976. Getting there was not easy.

For as long as I can remember, I never felt like I fit in. But all that changed when I found a group who accepted me – the drinkers – and I was introduced to alcohol. I was 16 and I vividly remember my first drinking experience. A few of us – 2 guys and 3 girls – were in a car. I can't recall why but I sure remember what happened. The boys brought out a bottle of cheap gin and after taking a couple of swigs themselves, passed the bottle to the girls. Without hesitation I took a big swallow and thought I'd been poisoned! It burned all the way down and tasted awful. But I soon felt a warm glow rise through my body. I relaxed and began to enjoy myself. When the bottle came my way a second time, I didn't hesitate. I still hated it, but I sure loved how it made me feel. Next, the boys brought out cigars, lit up, took a drag and passed them around. Wanting to fit in, I took a drag too. Big mistake. I was never as sick as I was that night and I vowed it would never happen again. To this day I've never smoked another cigar, but I spent 20 years trying to drink successfully.

Those 20 years included a marriage, because that's what my generation did. I don't blame my husband for its failure. We were two incomplete people trying to find completion in each other. The good of that marriage is our 4 children. The bad is that the only way I felt OK was when I was drinking and that rarely turned out well. From the beginning I couldn't hold my booze. More often than not, I got sick and ended up "kneeling at the porcelain goddess." On the surface I was a successful teacher, respected church and community member. I had friends. That all played into my denial. I didn't drink like I imagined of an alcoholic. I didn't drink the amounts or types of alcohol others did. It was the sweet, ladylike drinks for me. I was not a bar drinker. I was never arrested.

Yes, I managed to look good on the outside, but inside I was drowning in fear, shame, loneliness, and overwhelming hopelessness. No amount of alcohol could fill that black hole.

At that time I didn't realize how much alcoholism ran through my family and how it had affected me and ultimately my marriage, children, and work. Finally, it all caught up with me. On January 6, 1976, my older daughter, who was 15 at the time, overdosed on a combination of Phenobarbital and brandy and almost died. She was taken to a hospital that housed the county alcoholism council. A member of the counseling staff visited my daughter and the head counselor wanted to talk with me. I was totally unprepared for his first question: "Your daughter says you drink too much. Do you?" He patiently listened as I began a recitation of my "I nevers." When I "ran down," he said, "You've told me what you don't do; what do you do?" I was speechless; which may come as a surprise to anyone who knows me. He began painting a picture of what alcoholism is and what it does. Before he finished, I was crying and saying, "Oh, my God, you're talking about me."

Thus began my journey into recovery. I had a lot to learn about my addictive disorder and how it had affected my life. I had to understand the part denial played. But most importantly, I had to lay to rest the guilt and shame, especially as it related to my children, all of whom were affected by addiction in different ways. I owe my life to a supportive recovery community that loved me until I could love myself. My recovery journey has been nothing short of amazing; filling me with peace, hope, love, and purpose. In short, a life beyond my wildest dreams.

My four children have found their own pathways to recovery, and their children (my 6 grandchildren), I'm proud to say, are addiction free. I believe the cycle has been broken in my family. My commitment and life's purpose will always be to demonstrate the reality of recovery. I'm proud to be a face and voice of recovery.

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