



When Alcohol is More Important Than Family

By Taylor Chapin

My dad grew up with hardly anything. He was someone who did not have everything in the world. He was lucky enough to have a pair of shoes without a hole in them. It didn't help to have an abusive alcoholic father figure. His father, my grandpa, was more concerned about his alcohol intake and getting a buzz rather than taking care of his family. However, this situation can be good learning advice for anyone.

They lived in a very old, run down trailer house. The wood on the outside had blue and white paint peeling. I remember the house had brown stained ceilings from water that leaked in when it rained. All of the windows were covered in plastic to try and keep heat in during the winters. It had all old appliances and gross orange stained carpet. The house seemed as if it would fall apart in pieces any minute.

My grandpa served in the Vietnam War and never since had a real job. His full time job was drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes all day. His wife owned and ran a Grocery store in the town of Havana, North Dakota until it ran out of business and shut down forever. My dad had two other brothers that his parents needed to care for.

However, there was no money for them to do any extra little things. They didn't go on vacations, to movies, or anything extra. My grandpa's children paid for their own stuff when they were old enough to get jobs, but until then my dad had a total of two pairs of jeans and maybe three t-shirts while in elementary school. He and his siblings did not get new tennis shoes every year. They wore old ones until there were holes in them big enough for their shoe to fall off of their feet.

To make matters worse, these three boys went to school with black and blue bruises on their faces covering their eyes. Sometimes they would have bruises on their arms or on their sides. Their dad abused them. Not only did he not have a job to supply and care for his family, but he had to beat them and abuse them. They were emotionally and physically abused daily. They were glad when it came to 8am every morning, just so they could be at school and away from their father and in a better environment. They spent as little amount of time as they had to at home. There is truly nothing worse than having a feeling of not wanting to go home and spend time with your father. These actions continued until the boys were old

enough to stand up to him and realize not to go out of their way to deal with him.

Later on in high school my dad got a job since my grandpa's children had to work for what they had and they had no help at home from their parents. Their dad used what little money they had on alcohol and cigarettes. My dad was passionate and lucky enough to get a job and make money for himself. He bought his own class ring, school letterman's jacket, old beat up car, any clothes he had in high school and any other necessity he needed. He went on to college and had no help from his parents. He was very independent and put aside the thought of his troubling abusive father.

This situation was dealt with by the three boys striving to do their best and going off to college and getting jobs. They never had to go back to my grandpa by choice and never relied on him. He realized how he got into this situation and understood the boys not wanting him in their lives. I learned that family is the most important thing in life and nothing comes before it. I know that I don't want the only remembrance of myself being the smell of cigarettes and alcohol on my breath, like the memories I have for him. Others can learn that being an alcoholic can lead to mental, physical, and emotional abuse. Also, people can learn about the hurtful impact that is left on the families in these kinds of situations. It is wrong to put anything before your family.

Family should always be number one. The substances put into your body are harmful and take over your life in negative ways. In the end, my grandpa never gave up alcohol. His body shut down and was so sick of the harmful substances constantly being in him. His liver started to fail and eventually shut down. This is truly a very sad situation to deal with, but a lot can be learned from it. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Taylor Chapin is a recent high school graduate from North Dakota. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.