



## Our Saving Grace

By Dani Feagler

**S**OMETIMES it takes a while to realize a person is growing up with an alcoholic father. As a young child, one can hear the muffled fighting through a closed bedroom door. She can smell the odd and bitter stench on her father's breath. She is almost aware of the nights her mom spends crying when he does not come home. But until she is older, she does not know that this is what it means to grow up with a dad that suffers from alcohol abuse. I grew up in that home.

Over time I realized what all of that meant. I tried to deal with it. I definitely learned from it. I am glad I do not live in that home anymore.

He was not just my father. He was my daddy. The man whose lap I would sit on and watch TV with every night. He is the man I would love to tell my stories to and tell what happened at school. When I was little, I did not notice the slurred speech. I did not notice the hatred in his voice. I did not realize that what my dad drank from those cans was slowly killing, not only him, but my family. When I finally reached my teenage years, I found out what was wrong.

I listened to him yell at my mom and leave the house in a rage. I watched him suck the contents of a bottle or can down like it was nothing and saw how it would change him. This man was no longer the daddy I had grown up loving; he was just the father in the house. The way we dealt with it was to ignore the problem. My mom would try not to nag at him, and I would hide out in my room whenever I was home. I found out the hard way that if a problem is just ignored, it does not go away. The icy winter night when he still had not shown up at midnight was when the breaking point had been met. My mom called the bar, called the police, and tried to call him; but, she did not receive any answers. It was then that I retreated to my room for the night and tried to pretend I could not hear my mom's sobs. I prayed to a God that I did not yet know if I believed in. I prayed that my dad would disappear and leave us alone. I prayed that he would stop hurting us. I was laying in my bed, crying and shaking, when I heard his pick up pull in the drive way. I heard him stomp into the house. I heard his hate filled voice in combat

with my mom's broken one. That was not quite the end, but it was the beginning of the end. For a few more years my mom and I dealt with his drunkenness through denial. I still prayed that God would save us from him. Finally, I thought it had happened.

My mom found out about the affair and kicked him out. I barely spoke to him and had no desire to make an effort to. But slowly he came back. He begged my mom to take him back. He said he would do what it took. I was skeptical, and she was too. We were both scared that he had not changed. But he had. In the time that my dad had been kicked out, he lived in my grandparent's camper. Most of the time my younger brother stayed with him, but in the first few nights he was there alone, something happened. My dad realized he was broken. He realized what a horrible father and husband he had been. The realization of what being consumed by the bottle had done to him washed over him. He prayed to the God he had forgotten about to forgive and save him, and to save his family as well. He swears he heard God say, "Okay, but we're doing it my way". I suppose for some people it works and some people it does not. But my dad quit drinking cold turkey that night and found the way to save our family.

As of January 22, 2014, my dad has been 3 years sober. If it was not for his problem with alcohol abuse, I would not be the person I am, and we would not have the family we have. My dad's drinking problem led us to being the Christian family we are. Through his alcoholism, I discover who I will never be. My dad let me see how a substance can nearly destroy a family, but in a way it built our family. My prayers were answered. 🙏

### ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Dani Feagler is a high school senior from Wyoming. *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.