

DID I OR DIDN'T I?

One of my dreams as a teenager was to become a lawyer.

I came from a middle income family. They paid my college tuition and I worked part-time for expense money. In my senior year at college I had a fiancée and decided to get married and get a job instead of going to law school. But after being married for a few months I knew I had to be a lawyer. My wife agreed and we worked together to accomplish that goal.

Although I had three children and worked full-time, I graduated. Soon thereafter, I passed the bar and began practicing. Success came quickly as a result of some fortuitous events and within three years I was a senior partner in a very successful firm.

Sounds like a time to celebrate, and celebrate I did! Every day I drank alcohol and was proud to be known as a hard drinker. This went on for a few years until the alcohol changed my life.

I got divorced, terminated my partnership and sold out my interest in a building. I became a sole practitioner so I would have no interference in my life. I accepted this as normal behavior.

I eventually went into terrible depression, compounded with the alcohol. I sought treatment, where I eventually realized I had been living an abnormal life.

But before I got to treatment I must tell you that the efforts of other attorneys to help me were the keys that opened my eyes to the fact that I was an alcoholic and needed help. I rejected the first few attempts of attorney friends because I was in denial that I could be an alcoholic. But admitting that I was an alcoholic was the first giant step to recovery and a normal life.

We must understand that alcoholism is a disease and not an indication of weak character traits. Strong will power is not the answer.

I would promise myself before I went out to only have a certain number of drinks and then stop, *but I didn't*.

I would promise myself that I would not get drunk and embarrass myself or others with the things I would say or do, *but I did*.

I would switch from gin or scotch to beer so I wouldn't get drunk, *but I did*.

What I finally realized was, if I have to give thought to what I drank or how much I drank so I didn't get drunk, that's a strong indication that I might have a drinking problem. At the very least I had to make a call to Lawyers Helping Lawyers to discuss the situation... *And I did*.