

Shannon's Interview with Tom MacDonald

October 31, 2020

So, what's left? God.



The alcoholic progression took over my life at blinding speed.

SL: How did your addiction progress from there?

TM: By the time I was sixteen, the booze was calling the shots and the trouble started. Along the way I got thrown out of two colleges in two countries, all because of my drinking. Both colleges were Catholic. The priests tried to talk to me, but I wouldn't listen. A nun tried, too. At the second college, I showed up for a final exam drunk and passed out on the desk. The drinking was out of control, and I didn't know it. Alcoholism told me everything was fine. When I got back from Canada, I bartended and worked in a liquor store, both signposts. I needed to be around alcohol.

SL: Please describe your childhood?

TM: My childhood was fantastic. I grew up in an Irish-Catholic family, the oldest of seven children. I was the first grandchild, and my grandparents spoiled the heck out of me. I had a great aunt named Agnes Lally, Aunt Iggie. She lived in Cambridge and she'd take me on train rides to Arch Street and Jordan Marsh and Bailey's Ice Cream and the Science Museum and Sullivan Square. I played sports and went to Nantasket Beach and Paragon Park. Life couldn't have been better.

SL: How and when did addiction begin manifesting, at what age?

TM: When I was thirteen years old, I went down to the railroad track for a few beers. If life was good before, it got even better after few cans of Schlitz. Everyone I knew drank, but I don't remember any peer pressure. When I got sober, a friend said that I was the peer pressure. I didn't want anyone to miss out on all the fun.

SL: Can you describe your path towards recovery?

TM: I was on a path to disaster when the grace of God came into my life. I was thirty-one, and the drinking was fully entrenched. And in an instant my life took a one-eighty. Everything changed. I knew I had taken my last drink. I take no credit for the miracle that happened. It was all God, an unmerited gift from God, and the miracle happened just in time. Up to that point in my drinking life, I never had a rum fit or suffered the DTs. I was never admitted to a sanitarium, although I should have been. I was spared those heartaches. So was my family. We can't outthink this disease, and we can't will it away. Willpower is useless. Intellectualizing is worse. So, what's left? God. Our Higher Power is the only thing that works. All we have to do is be willing, and God will take care of the rest.

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SL: What has helped you maintain your recovery?

TM: To maintain my sobriety, I attend Alcoholic Anonymous meetings, I practice the twelve steps of recovery, I talked to my friends in the fellowship, and I pray and meditate. These are the tools I use to stay sober. It's a small price to pay for a sober and sane way of living.

SL: What advice would you give to someone in early recovery?

TM: Surrender your life and Will to the care of God as you understand Him. AA is not a religious program. It is a spiritual program. Living a spiritual lifestyle, based on the twelve steps, works for alkie. It has worked for me, and it will work for you. I guarantee it.

