

# Journeys



## John's Story

John Kay is an American Poet and Photographic Artist. Over the years he has honed his work in both fields and can truly be called unique. He has exhibited his work in many European cities and has had three volumes of his poetry published, with a new volume of his 12 liners, due to be published later this year. John is also in recovery from addiction and has kindly shared his journey story with us below.

After twenty years without a sip of Merlot or any other spirit, I've earned the right to say a few things about the Journey. I had had enough for all the usual reasons, so what brought me to the crossroads where I decided to divorce myself from my lover of many years, and what kept me from returning to her door?

For me, and I must qualify whatever I say, limiting my words to my own experience, breaking it off with alcohol was my only choice. I was fortunate to be unable to incorporate it into my life; my employer once asked me if I was Irish because of my quick temper, and at first, I was shocked, until I found the connection between my anger and drink. Again, I was fortunate in not being able to deny the connection. When I drank, I got angry, and when I got angry, I drank. I was an angry young man. I turned the anger on my family, and that was the beginning of the end of my relationship with booze.

I went through treatment, did my best to follow the 12 Steps of the program, studied psychology and counseling, became an "alcoholologist" and worked on the detox ward of a major, metropolitan hospital. I bought into the recovery model fully and saw myself in a perpetual state of "recovery," as we're taught to see ourselves. I was just inches away from the fall at any moment. I was a good soldier,

working my way up the ranks, reading my Big Book.

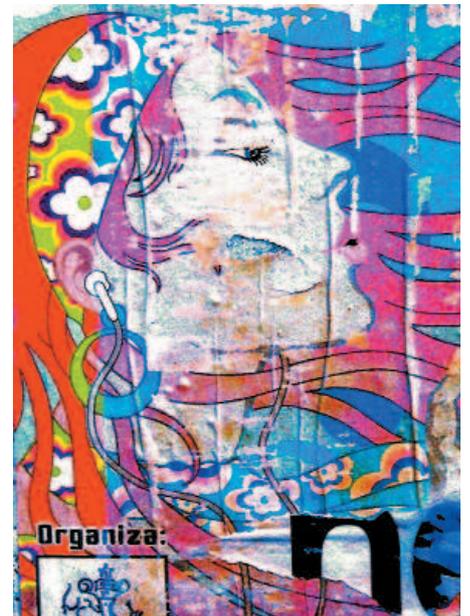
Then, somewhere in the twelve to fifteen year period, I began to mellow out. It occurred to me that though I had not lost the desire to get high, alcohol no longer presented itself as an option-it was no longer on the table, so to speak-no matter how difficult the life circumstances, and I

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can tell you, I have felt the pain of being human in every way possible.

Now this is verging on the spiritual. It is a mystery to me that I have not reached for the bottle in all these years. When there seems to be no answer, I must suspect that just maybe it has been a higher power looking out for me. Unanswered questions and mysteries lead me in that direction. Though God fits into my vocabulary, I have certainly had a long, difficult struggle with him. At best, he seems to be a "silent witness," but then again, maybe he is responsible for my 20 years of sobriety. It would be easy to give him credit, but in my heart-I'm still not sure.

The anger has abated, and in addition to 20 years without Merlot, I'm still married to the same woman for 33 years, and haven't been in jail or lost any jobs because of alcohol. I don't feel special, really-just lucky. Damn lucky and grateful.



*“I don't feel special, really - just lucky. Damn lucky and grateful”*

Please send us your stories of recovery to help pass the message of recovery on to those who need it. Stories can be sent by post to Genie In The Gutter, 88 Rodney Street, Liverpool L1 9AR or email them to: [carolynedwards@genieinthegutter.co.uk](mailto:carolynedwards@genieinthegutter.co.uk)