

Questor 7: The Worst and the Best of 2005

The worst of 2005: One night last August, I drank too much and woke up with a blasting headache and nausea, ran to the loo (that's what we folks down under call it) and broke my ankle on the way. I was bedridden for almost a month and couldn't even make a cup of coffee without asking for help.

The best of 2005: One night last August, I drank too much and woke up with a blasting headache and nausea, ran to the loo (that's what we folks down under call it) and broke my ankle on the way. I was bedridden for almost a month and couldn't even make a cup of coffee without asking for help.

Hmmmm, you might be muttering to your self now, what the heck is she carrying on about? Well, how could the worst event also be the best? And that is what my little story is about today.

Five months and one day ago, today (she says smiling to herself), I did something that I chose to do. No one put a gun to my head. I offer no excuse for it. The booze didn't leap out of the bottle and pour itself down my throat. I chose to drink way too much and the cost of the buzz I got was a broken ankle, nausea, and humiliation. (I learned later that the benefit of that event was the opportunity to change my life for the better.)

I'm in my 50's. Like a lot of you here, I "got away" with my drinking for many years. Perhaps I had more hangovers than other people but my answer to that was, small price to pay for the buzz I got. I held one job or another for almost four decades. Sometimes I had money, Sometimes I didn't. At one point I owned a very "flash" car and thought I was the cat's meow because of it. I had fake nails, dated lots of interesting men, travelled all over the world. I never went to jail. I worked out, jogged and went to tap dancing classes. I never got a DUI. I mostly fit in with other people. And the only time in my life I ever drank in the morning was because I had been up all night at a party and everyone there was drinking with me.

So why come to SMART? Why decide to abstain? Because during all of that so-called moderating, I was measuring. Yes, that's what I meant to say. Measuring. I was measuring how many drinks I was having every time I was out with other people. I was measuring the booze bottle levels at home to make sure they weren't going down too much. I was almost always careful not to drink before 5 pm. Somehow that made it ok. It was a very tiring and time consuming activity to keep measuring. I was also very careful not to slur when I drank alone and called people up to chat.

So, I finally had the good fortune of getting so sick one morning that I fell and broke my ankle. My ankle is still not healed. I did some nerve damage that could take months to heal. I'm not complaining. I view my ankle as my ally, my reminder of the cost of drinking.

The reason my broken ankle is my blessing in disguise is that it made choosing not to drink so very easy. For thirty years I had hangovers. They would go away and I would easily forget how nauseous I had felt. I don't think I will ever forget my broken ankle. It's my greatest instant urge buster.

And the months that followed that event have been the most rewarding of my life. I don't measure drinks anymore. I live my life. I do the things I didn't use to dare to do. I do things that I don't like doing. I stand back and observe my behavior. I deal with problems that I used to run from. I'm calmer. I'm more loving. I'm creative.

And there's one last thing I want to add. I'm incredibly grateful to all the SMARTees out there (and there are too many to list) who have been walking with me on my journey, supporting me, laughing with me, crying with me. You SMARTees have taught me so much. My life seemed really topsy turvy when I got here. Sometimes it still does. The difference now is that I can accept that life can be chaotic. I can except that the guys next store are in a band and play rock and roll too loud. I can accept the weather is really crappy for New Years eve and we're just about going to boil tonight.

There's a tool box at SMART that's just sitting there waiting to help the next person who chooses to put the tools to work. I started with a CBA, and then an ABC and now I'm working on USA and UOA. Nestled inside these acronyms are skills just waiting to be developed. I learned it was all up to me and that it was never too late to do anything.

And the most wonderful thing is that I don't have an urge to drink tonight. I don't feel like I'm missing something. The only thing that will be missing in my life is the hangover that goes with the drinking. And that's something I'm happy to miss.

So SMARTees, happy New year. It's the year of the dog so I know it's going to be a great year.

My plan? To stay sober and write to you in August 2006 about how great it is be sober for one year. Other plans? Yes, many other plans. I'm studying many new ideas right now, plunking a bit on my guitar and playing a little piano. I'm also taking acting classes. It was a passion for me back in the sixties. I'm trying it without my DOC now and it's a lot more fun. As dear Druid once said to me, there's a lot more to life than not drinking. I'll drink (lemonade) to that!

Warmest regards

Questor7

P.S. I have one little saying that never lets me down. "Drinking is never an option." It keeps that door to drinking shut permanently, and I like that.