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PRIDE GETS IN YOUR WAY

I sit here trying to think of what great picture I can paint in your mind to keep you reading, and not just pass this over thinking that it is just another lame story, so let me tell you this. I love to make people laugh. When I write things I hope that the person reading this will go away with a smile on their face. My second goal is to reach out to that one person that seems to be stuck on what to do next.

So let me get on with this so I can make you smile. I was born weighing 10lbs. 10oz., now I don't know if that is big or not, but my mother always told me how I caused her so much pain before and after I was born. I was one of these tall skinny kids that would fall all over my feet all the time. I had a bigger brother that would beat the crap out of me all the time, but it did make me stronger, and taught me how to fight, and how I loved to fight, (when I won). It seems that the bigger you are and the stronger you are, and the more you punch on people the more respect you have. Or the more people are scared of you. I bet a lot of you know what I am talking about.

The next thing I want you to know about me is that I hated school!! I would do anything to make them send me home. I had a great one where I would eat hard boiled eggs and beans right before going to bed. I would get into class and just start letting them go until I was told to go. I could always find something to do to get me tossed out of class, so I could hang out with the others that

thought it was a lot better to run around then be stuck in a class room. My father would beat the shit out of me every time the school would call him with another report of me doing something. His beatings just made me hate school that much more. Hey, they ratted on me to my father. Soon my father just gave up. I was sent to my grandparents who owned a dairy. I didn't have to go to school but I did have to work. As I got older people were always trying to help me want to learn. But by that time, pride would not let me admit that I needed help. If I had any problems I could always fight my way out of it. That is until one night in a bar two drunks thought they would have fun playing with my head. I was drinking quite a bit myself. To make a long story short, they ended up dead and I was in prison. And let me tell you, I hated the world!! I blamed everyone for all of my problems. I was filled with so much hate, and I let everyone around me know it. I was tested and told that I had a third grade reading and writing level, and not much higher in math. I was offered schooling, but I told them to shove it, because I didn't need that crap. I also learned that each race had nothing to do with the other races except to fight with them. and that was right up my alley. I spent the next six years in ad/seg. (the hole) Now I want to tell all of you that are outside of these walls. You may hear stories, or see movies, but nothing will get you ready for prison. Prison is filled with assholes like me, who hate the world as much as they beat themselves. From the time that you get up in the morning and they rack that door, until night when you get locked in, you walk around waiting for someone

to stab you. And if you think a gang will stop them, they want to stab you even more.

After 6 years I went to my first Doc. hearing. This is where they go over your crime, and tell you what you need to do to get out of prison. Until that day I had never thought about getting out of prison. Wow, these people were telling me that if I got an education and worked on helping myself that I could get out. The streets were still fresh in my mind, but what I wanted to do most was get out and kill my lawyer, the judge, and anyone else that had put me in prison. [REDACTED]

PRIDE BE GONE

I changed hate for revenge, and each step made me hate them all the more. I was put in a class for dummies. A is for apple, can you say Aaaaa? B is for bird, can you say Beee? I kid you not. All I needed was a bike helmet, and a little yellow school bus. Here I am 25 years old learning my a,b,c's. After two years I was able to start reading on my own. They first started you reading westerns. They were a little harder to read then see Dick run. Run Dick run. But each day I remembered my goal, and I kept at it no matter how dumb I felt.

I was taken to Board. This is where you get told if they are going to let you out or not. They told me that I had started on the right path and to keep it up. They wanted to see me back in two years. Hey, I could two more years of this crap, standing on

my head. Also the Board wanted me to start going to A.A. and N.A., nope, I wasn't going to that because I was not a drunk or a drug user so there was no reason for me to go. I was soon to learn a very valuable lesson. Those who have all the gold, make the rules, and the Board had all the gold. No matter that I was getting a's and b's I didn't go to A.A. and N.A. come back in two years.

Going to A.A. and N.A. reminded me of having to go to church when I was a little kid. You had to listen to people talk but in the end you got cool-aid and cake. Now it was coffee and cake.

SANTA'S HELPERS

I started to notice that in A.A. and N.A. and even in education, there was always one or two guys (inmates) that if they saw that you were trying would go out of there way to help you. It seemed that they got fun out of making you smarter, or making you understand better. These were the same kind of people that were on the other side of the wall that I never wanted anything to do with. But now it sure would have made my life a whole lot easier if I had let them help me in the first place. But like all kids, you will never listen until you are ready. I started to listen to the people in A.A. and N.A.. like me they blamed everyone and everything on the others that made their lives stink. I would agree with them there, but then they would start talking about how it all came back to them, and what they did. That would be the part that I would tune out on. But there was always a Santa's helper around. You know one

of those little elves that worked on the toys and the longer they worked the better the toy would look. Well A.A. and N.A. had it's Sant's helpers, in that they would always take you, work on you a little bit, and then tell you to come back next week. These little elves didn't care how much coffee you drank, or how much cake you ate, just so long as you came and listened. I found Santa's helpers in Vocation, or any job that I went into. They each had there own little tool that made you a little bit of a better person. And like the elves in Santa's workshop they never took credit for it.

TIME GOES BY

I am now 54 years old and I have done 33 years in prison. One of the hardest things to do in prison is grow up. There are so many people that are filled with hate and anger, that they want you to fell the same way too. But a few of us do break through, and I am one of the lucky ones. But more on that later. Remember how I said he who owns all the gold makes all the rules? I was so naive. I really thought the Board went by the rules, but I was to find out that the Board was run by the governor of the state. He is the one who picks the people who sit on the Board, and get paid a lot of money for doing nothing. So if they don't do what the governor wants he gets rid of them and puts someone else in their place. So I now know that no matter what I do I will never get out of prison unless the law changes and the power is taken out of the governor's and Board's hands. I learned this about 10 years ago, and at first it really made me mad, but there is one thing that all the Santa's

helpers made me understand, and that is: no matter where you are, no matter how old you are, and no matter how much time you are doing you can always reachout and help others. I know that really sounds dumb, and it was really dumb to me to, until I saw the movie "Pay itIt Forward", where a little kid helps three people, and they help three others and so on. So how can you stick it to the man, (the ones with all the gold) and not get into trouble? By knowing the law. I went to the law library everyday, and I read every book that I could find about the law and how it works. Then I started reading the prison rule books, and knowing every rule inside and out. I became one of those Santa' helpers when it comes to the law. I help people win their prison write-ups, I help others get ready for Board. Being honest with them, but also helping them go to court if they need to. So far I have helped three men get out of prison but that isn't the biggest thing. I no longer hate. I make each day count. I am now going to college and getting an Associated Arts degree, I now love to study and find out new things. Half the people know my name for good things that I have done, not for beating them up. And now when the door opens in the morning, I look forward to the day. I go to A.A. and N.A. looking for that person who needs someone to talk to in the hope that I can use my little tool to make them into a littl bit of a better person.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Remember I said that I like to make people smile? If none of

this has touched you, and gave you that warm spark that starts a smile then there is only one cure for you. A really dumb joke. What do you get when you put two apples together? A pear. See now that was so dumb I know that you are smiling.