My Dad Quit Drinking and Reversed Cirrhosis

January 16, 2020 By Karen Hoyt

Karen Hoyt is a blogger who has a story about hepatitis C, cirrhosis, end-stage liver disease, liver cancer, and liver transplantation. This excerpt first appeared on Karen's I Help C blog.

You have so many questions about drinking with liver disease. I've shared pieces of my story, and now it's time to tell you about how my dad quit drinking and reversed cirrhosis. I learned a lot about liver disease after his liver failed in 1980 from drinking, never dreaming I would have cirrhosis later and need this knowledge. I had my nursing school textbooks, and we learned how to keep dad alive, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

Beer Drinking and Hell Raising

My daddy drank from his youth, and I grew up with memories of a six pack in the fridge. On weekends he spent evenings at the pool hall, especially around payday. Being a truck driver, he was on the road a lot and drank at his hotel or in his truck. He was a shade tree, football watching, dancing to the record player at home drinker. My gosh, he was a lot of fun when he was drinking, but he could get mean. I talk about this casually, but there were many many hardships and struggles (physical, mental, and emotional) that took place behind the scenes. I loved my dad, and he raised 4 great kids, took care of my mom, and was an amazing man.

Not a Lot of Liquor

I was in my teens when he was hospitalized and had to have a varices banding. He went dry for about 2 years and then started drinking even harder. I would say that most of his life he averaged 3 or 4 beers a day, and could also put away a case with friends on the weekend. He was never a hard liquor drinker, and when he tried it, his body went down quickly.

When dad was 44, I was living in a nearby city. Mom took him to ER and they admitted him to ICU. His liver totally failed. This time, he lost a lot of blood and was incoherent with hepatic encephalopathy. Within hours, he slipped into a hepatic coma. Within a few days, he was moved him from ICU to a regular room. I visited many times just to watch him sleep.

A Wake-Up Call

About a month into his hospital stay, mom got a call in the middle of the night. Dad had gotten out

of bed, removed his IVs, and left the hospital. She called all of us kids. I remember having to work the next day and wondering how soon I could get there. Within a couple of hours, they called back. The Tulsa Police picked him up wandering the streets near St John's Medical Center. They dismissed him to mom's care.

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