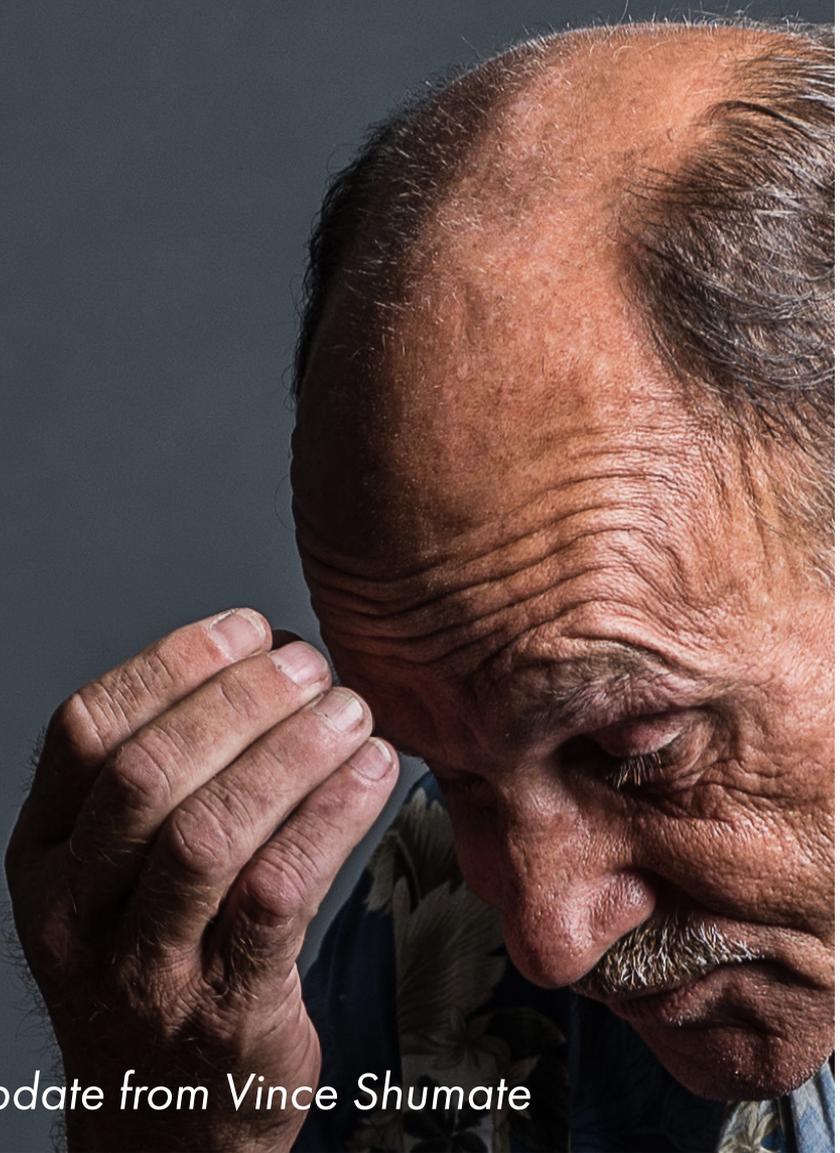


\$5.00

**i am vince**



*An Update from Vince Shumate*

Six times now I've started what I thought was to be an uplifting article on turning the page in my life.

I guess I haven't turned the page on  
what occurred in my life on  
December 17th.

What began as generosity had become slavery.

My host/ruler had turned me from a live-in housekeeper and pet sitter into an indentured servant with the constant threat of being homeless at the drop of a hat.

Winters in the mountains of Asheville, North Carolina are known to be quite cold.

I walked away from a job washing dishes not because the dishes were greasy, like the management.

I find out about an hour later that a friend like a brother had just died.

With over a year's sobriety I wanted a drink. That was against the rules. I clanked the bottles loud enough for my landlord/roommate to hear it.

I didn't touch it.

I waited for him to throw me out.

I didn't drink it.

I think the realization hit that his servant had enough and was ready for a long overdue exit. He went into a rage and physically attacked me.

I guess I wanted my dignity back at any cost.

I left with the clothes on my back, laptop, camera, and phone. That was basically it.

Then I had a drink. And another and another. It's been 2 months to the day. It's now February 17th.

I want my sobriety back.

I have it at least for today, the first day for a while.

I have to turn the page. So here I am in Wilmington again. I used to live here about 4 years ago.

Why Wilmington? Probably the two main reasons are I'm familiar with it and it's not Asheville. For the past two months I've gotten drunk, gone to jail, been to detoxes, and had nightmares all night, most every night.

I guess if I don't 'Turn the Page' I might as well close the book. I can't. I have many more blank pages to go.

I told a friend once that the only thing worse than being residentially challenged is becoming newly residentially challenged. (homeless)

That's probably one of the toughest things I'm going through right now: from the comfort of shelter to the uncertainty of living on the streets. I'll deal with it. I have for many years. Hopefully it won't be as long on the streets this time as it has been on many occasions before.

If that's not the absolute toughest part I'll tell you what is: Self pity. Poor me, poor me, pour me another drink.

I don't have another run like that in me.

So if I let what happened to me on that one day kill me, it won't be the alcohol that does it. It'll be the self pity. He fed me my shredded dignity on a plate everyday and and I knew what it was and ate it wholeheartedly. I was just thinking it's cold outside and about to get colder. I

thought if I could just handle being treated like trash for another month or so, I could get my own place.

That automatically brings up another facet of what I'm going through. Better worded as putting myself through. Nobody can beat me up mentally better than myself.

Why did I let it go on for so long? To such an extreme. This is the part that probably hurts more than anything. I let the degradation go on so much and for so long

because because I kept thinking, “If I can tough this out a little longer, a little longer, I might actually become not homeless.”

I haven't been able to let that dream enter my mind in over twenty years.

Yeah, sure there have been times where I've had a job (of some sorts) and a roof over my head but it was a job that I knew would never last and the roof always seemed

temporary because so. When I did have some sort of shelter and some sort of job I was still drinking. Maybe not drunk everyday but still drinking. Drinking inherently makes things temporary. Jobs, relationships, friendships, community, health, and life. Just to name a few. This is the first time in about 30 years that I really had a shot at life.

Life like I had when I was living in Long Beach, California. I said like.

I had an apartment on Naples Island. A boat hull cleaning business with my own Zodiac docked about 100 feet in front of my living room window, a '65 baja Volkswagen bug, a 250 dirt bike and community.

Then at 24 years of age I was diagnosed with osteoarthritis in my back. Due to a bad gymnastics spill at a younger age, was the general consensus. I could no longer wear 18 pounds of lead on my waist. My work scuba diving was over. That's when my life began to crumble.

Being genetically predisposed to drink didn't help.

But I have made it another 30 years. That's a lot of pages written.

Maybe now that I recognize what has happened over the last 60 days, and most importantly why it happened, I can finally turn the page. And start living once again.

*iamvince*

## **ABOUT SPEAK UP**

Speak Up equips remarkable people facing homelessness with a magazine that releases their voice and give them a chance to work and earn money. As they buy and sell Speak Up magazines (and keep the profits), they discover dignity, develop skills, accomplish goals, and get off the streets.

*Speak Up is a 501(c)3 nonprofit. Your financial support makes it happen.*

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