**GROUP SPEECH**

**FOR**

**SAMUEL MC DUFFIE**

Hi everyone. I want to thank the group for giving me the chance to speak with all of you and to share my story. Over the past few years, as I’ve learned about myself, what I’ve done... my history... my own personal battles and breakthroughs... have showed me the way to a balance and an awareness in life that I really needed to find. I also now realize that as I speak, as I share my story, and as I learn more about the stories of other people in the “same boat,” I am seeing that I found a community and notice a kind of healing take place. We all have our own special stories and whether people are in the program or not, it is in our power to learn from everyone as a way of becoming more aware about ourselves. I want you to know that what I am about to tell you.... is the story of my life. Please don’t think anything I say is an excuse for the places I found myself or the messes I had to take responsibility for... but didn’t ... at the time. I do want you to know that those more extreme events have served as my best teachers in life. They’ve shown me the way... the **HARD** way... and they force me to really take a look at, and **own** my actions.

My story... and what I can remember of it.... I’m pretty sure there was even more than I can recall or dare to say.... began when I was young. I was born in San Francisco. When I was five years old, my father “left the picture.” My mother and I moved to Daly City. I was raised by my mother, a single parent responsible for everything. I know she did the best she could, but the hand she was dealt made survival difficult. Between her emotional issues and having to work several jobs to hold us together, life was really hard. I guess in some ways, as I got older, I was drawn to situations that guided me to “**check out**.” ... no need to wonder why....

Checking out was something my friends and I **DID NOT DO** in that Safeway that day in (**Name the year**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when my friends and I stole that fifth of Bacardi. I was in my sophomore year of high school and I was hanging out with people... now I can see I was drawn to the **wrong** people. I felt the urge to experiment and I did. My choices were reckless but I didn’t realize that at the time. I just wanted to “get away.”... to escape. We took that stolen bottle of Bacardi, went to the beach, and history began to write itself. Did I realize I was doing something wrong? Did I **care**??? Heck **NO**!!! I felt cool.... I felt accepted....I felt like I finally **belonged**... to the **RIGHT** wrong crowd. I got wasted on stolen booze while indulging in underage drinking.... I was on my way.... As I look back at that beginning, I think we can say I was **high on life**.... in the **worst** way possible.

When I first started drinking, I remember I just wanted to be cool... rebellious... and just **EF** off. I remember when I started high school, I felt anti social. I felt like I didn’t belong.... really... to the one group I **SHOULD** have been a part of, namely my class at school... and that was the **LAST** place I wanted to be. I just wanted to cut class and have fun... like I knew what fun really was ??? Something in me was triggered and there was no going back. I found people to “aid and abet” my bad behavior and for all of those people that might have thought I was a real loser.... I wasn’t aware... I was becoming a **HUGE** success at .... **failure**. I barely graduated from high school and had to go to continuation school... **BOY**!!! Did **THAT** **backfire**!!! Instead of paying attention so I could get **the heck** out of school, I wound up going **MORE**!!! **YIKES**!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Around the time I began to experiment with alcohol, my family moved from Daly City to Antioch.... I guess it’s true that everything is “relative” because this new place was definitely weirder than Daly City... and the crowd was rougher too. I continued to chase that “high” even more aggressively, in fact, the Antioch police picked me up for being drunk in public.... I remember waking up in my mother’s house... in the **SHOWER**... so, as I said, there are parts of these stories I really don’t remember. Looking back on all of this now, all I can say is my life was going down the tubes and there was nothing I was willing to do about it.

The one thing I have to point out in my favor is that I was creative, resourceful, and mostly **CURIOUS**.... naturally, I wanted to try other “stuff.” Did I know what I was doing? Were my friends any smarter? **Nope**... the were **NOT**. How can I ever forget the time we tried to smoke weed... **FROM AN APPLE**??!?!?!?! Guess what??? **SURPRISE**!!! It **DIDN'T WORK!! (Wait for the laugh)**.

After I graduated from high school, I got some jobs...for instance, at Taco Bell, but I didn’t take responsibility seriously... **at all**. At around the same time, my grandma died and my Uncle came to live with us. Oh... **GOOD**!! A stabilizing male influence in the house.... someone to help share the financial burden with my mother... family first!! Great!! just what I needed!!! It didn’t quite turn out that way... I was dealing with all of the sadness of losing my grandma... which I just didn’t know how to handle, and my uncle, to whom I turned for support and guidance, was generous... with weed, and alcohol, and cocaine. I was 24 and going downhill fast. I couldn’t hold down a job but something interesting was about to add to my life.... I met a girl.... I really tried to make the relationship work... or so I thought. I stopped associating with my “friends,” I fought to stay sober, white knuckling it all the way, and that lasted about 3 months. ... so it was back to my friends... back to getting high and drunk... one day, my friend’s father pointed out that “Man, you’re really crazy...” Thanks!! I didn’t know that!,, ... **much**... a couple of years passed by and while I was still with the same girlfriend, she found out she was pregnant. I really thought marriage and a baby would help keep me straight... not quite. One night I binged and as I was coming home, I heard my wife and her mother coming down the front stairs. I was embarrassed and ashamed of the condition I was in... and what does any responsible young adult do in that situation? I have no idea but I dove into the bushes to hide!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

My life was a roller coaster of highs... the **WRONG** kind... lows... and **LOWERS**. I spent so much time strung out on drugs and alcohol that I used to have to carry a card with me telling people to take me to my mother’s house if I was totally wasted unconscious, whatever. I got into another relationship... yeah... my first wife had enough... and things were going well for about a year and then... I lapsed. I went out.... for **A WEEK**... spent **TOO MUCH MONEY** and have practically no idea what I did, and when I came back, I was read the “riot rules.” It was all **ENOUGH**. I went to Community... rehab for 28 days and then stuff started to click for me.

I found the community I **NEEDED**. I found support and friendship and encouragement... and most of all, I found a place where I could ask myself the hard questions and find the encouragement to discover the answers. I got a sponsor and realized the importance of prayer. I realized the power in a positive **NO BULL CRAP** relationship and I have my wife, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to thank for her extremely **LOW** tolerance to bad behavior. I make sure to read The Book and go to meetings and surrender my considerations. In case you couldn’t tell... **HAHAHAHA**... I am really nervous to speak in front of all of you but I also know how important it is to give service... to all of you, and to me as well. No matter how uncomfortable I might be, if this is what it takes to stay sober, **I’M IN**.

I want to thank all of you for your patience, support, and most of all, for being a part of this community. I encourage us to live by the idea that “Where there’s life, there’s **HOPE**.” Together we can encourage each one of us to live meaningful, productive, sober lives.... **ONE. DAY. AT A TIME**... Let me know if you need anything from me and I will do my best to serve. Thank you all.