

In 1979, when Senator Riegle of Michigan became chairman of the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Subcommittee, I persuaded Senator Hughes to testify as a witness.

Indeed, he took a lot of persuading. "Now, Nancy," he bellowed, "you know that I have no intention of coming up to the Hill to try to advise my former colleagues about how to do their jobs. I am spending my full time, as you know, working for Christ."

I bellowed back: "Senator, there is nothing better you could do for Christ than to come up here and plead for the poorest of his poor, the drug addicts in the ghettos and the alcoholics on skid row."

In his opening statement that day, Riegle said, "Former Senator Harold Hughes, the first chairman of this subcommittee, is noted for his lifelong commitment to alcoholics, drug abusers, and other Americans who most need our understanding and support. I am extremely glad that Senator Hughes has agreed to testify...."

When he introduced Hughes he said, "You are known to me and everybody else who has become acquainted with the field of alcoholism, as a person who really provided the essential leadership to get this issue elevated and focused and to get the Federal Government to recognize that it was a national problem that required a national response. "Those of us who now are privileged to work in this area are really inheritors of that work that you began. So we are very honored to have you here today and we are interested in what your thoughts are that you have for us."

Senator Hughes' statement follows:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to be back with you this morning. When I was first approached about appearing here today I refused, because when I left the Senate four years ago it was to devote myself full time to the service of the Lord. Because of that commitment, I have refused any request which I felt would detract from that goal. But I was reminded by someone close to me that perhaps the way I could best serve Him on this morning of March 2, 1979, would be to appear before you to plead for the poorest of His poor.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus was often in the company of the social outcasts of that day - the prostitutes, the tax collectors, the lepers. Were He to walk on earth today, I believe that it would be with the social outcasts of this day we would find Him - the alcoholics on the skid rows of our cities, the drug addicts in the empty tenements, the lonely and the lost. So though I fully realize that alcoholism is no respecter of persons, and that alcoholism touches those from every walk of life, it is for that three to five percent of our Nation's alcoholics on skid row - and the drug addicts in the ghettos - for whom I make my plea this morning.

Mr. Chairman, another reason I hesitated to accept your invitation is that I am no longer knowledgeable about the current issues - specific authorization levels, the needs of the research community, nor the latest prevention techniques. There are many in this room far more able than I to advise you on that. Perhaps I can be most helpful to you if I give you a brief review of some of what I learned during the six years I sat in your chair.

A century ago an English author, Samuel Butler, wrote a book about an imaginary Utopian society called Erewhon. And in this mythical society, when people got sick, the authorities put them in jail. In 1969, when the subcommittee was formed, we did not have to look far to find modern-day Erewhons. Only the District of Columbia and the State of Maryland had decriminalized public drunkenness and provided for treatment in the public health system. In this Lenten season it is interesting to note that the court decision which led to that change in Washington was called the Easter decision. In *Easter v. District of Columbia*, the courts held that a homeless alcoholic could not be punished for his public intoxication. Mr. Easter was one such. He had been incarcerated several hundred times before Peter Hutt of the law firm of Covington and Burling, used him as a test case.

In every other State in the Union, alcoholic citizens were being thrown into jail for the sole crime of being sick in public. And many of them died in those jails from lack of medical attention. And I should add, Mr. Chairman, that it is not only men. Women, too, are among their numbers. Perhaps we are not aware of the women on skid row because we rarely see a woman sleeping in the gutter. Senator, they do not need to. A woman can usually find a bed for the night - by one dreadful method or another.

Dr. Veronica Maz, executive director of SOME - So Others Might Eat - has written a book called the Stick-Carrier. She tells of one such woman:

[Quote from Maz book]

June shouted, "I just got out," as she ran to greet me at the front gate of our soup kitchen. I glanced at her arm and saw the identifying hospital band she was wearing. Like many skid row women, June has experienced intense pain throughout her life but seldom discussed this with others. She had been beaten repeatedly. Seeing her with two black eyes or a swollen, bloody lip was not uncommon. Once her arm was in a cast. On another occasion her leg had been broken in several places. June shared a room with several other persons on the first floor of a three-story slum apartment dwelling. The "accident" which prefaced her hospital placement occurred there. Without any preliminary description, June explained, "He took me by my feet and dragged me like a back of potatoes up three flights of steps where he raped me." She stated that her head had bounced on every step, and her skin was consistently bruised and scraped on the concrete steps. "He dragged me. He dragged me," with rising inflection she repeated what seemed to her to be the greatest pain of all.

[end of Maz quote.]

In early 1970 I talked with one of the stick carriers. His name was Prince Wright. His story is also told in Dr. Maz' book. He was a big handsome black man, and his muscles and hands showed that he was a man used to hard labor. He hid his shyness behind a gruff manner. He told me he had been a stick carrier. "What the deuce is a stick carrier," I asked him. He explained a stick carrier is the name given to the homeless, destitute, needy persons who sleep in abandoned buildings, cars or trucks, and whose fears are those of being lonely, hungry, hurt, sick, burned alive, robbed, beaten, or frozen to death. They carry a stick to ward off the rats with whom they share their bed and food - often found in trash cans.

"We need a water fountain," he blurted out. Then he explained: "Where does a homeless, destitute man get a drink of water? He doesn't have a home - no water from there. He doesn't eat in restaurants, and many restaurants refuse requests for water from non customers. Public drinking fountains are practically non existent. Getting a drink of water can be a serious problem." To my lasting shame, I refused to give him any money. I was afraid he would go off and get drunk with it. I later learned that the Sisters of the Good Shepherd donated a drinking fountain to SOME.

Because of men like Prince - and women like June - in 1974 we amended the alcoholism act to give incentive grants to States which decriminalize public drunkenness and provide for treatment. More than half the States have now done this, but in many States in this country, Senator, alcoholics are still dying in jails for lack of treatment.

Mr. Chairman, when we drafted the alcoholism bill in 1970, and amended it in 1974, we made no specific mention of women. I make no apology for that. We did not know then that women would not receive full rights as citizens. I now know that little of the funds authorized by this Subcommittee have gone to help women. So I am pleased to learn that in 1976 my friend, Pete Williams [Senator Harrison A. Williams of New Jersey], amended the law to provide specific help for these women. And we paid too little attention to what our children were trying to tell us. When heroin addiction was considered only an inner-city problem, we ignored it. The shameful truth is that only when reports began pouring in about children from white, middle-class suburbs, children of famous Hollywood personalities -- yes, even children of politicians - getting busted on drug charges or dying of drug overdoses, did we begin to react.

When Larry Alan Bear, then commissioner of addiction services for the city of New York, testified before this subcommittee in 1970, he read a headline from a New York paper "Dope Kills Eight Youths in Week." He pointed out that it was not a new headline, but had appeared on November 19, 1962, eight years before.

In 1971 I heard testimony from a Harlem mother. She was testifying about how she could not get the police to close down a hangout in her New York City neighborhood where addicts shot up drugs. "Nobody cares about us up there," she snapped. "Nobody will come and see for themselves what goes on ... and" she glared at me, "I'm sure you don't care either." "I'll come," I said. "Well," she sniffed, "I'll believe it when I see it." So, a few months later, I turned up in Harlem with a few other nervous Senators. Pete Williams was with me, and Jack Javits and Dick Schweiker. She was surprised to see us. She told me to give \$10 to a boy - he was not more than eleven - and see how fast he would be back with heroin. We watched out a window as he went to the hamburger stand on the corner and brought back five bags of heroin. ... Then she challenged us to follow her to a shooting gallery across the street. We followed her down crumbling cement steps and through a basement doorway. I was frankly scared but she assured me I would be OK as long as I

was with her and some other blacks. She pulled back a blanket hanging across a clothesline and in the light of two candles we saw six men getting ready to shoot up. They were hooking up, a band around the arm, the needles ready. ... Suddenly a bright white light flooded the basement. We had forgotten all about the TV cameramen who had followed us during the day and had, without warning, turned on their floodlights to film the scene. One of my staff members scrambled in front of me, trying to protect me, and then there was a massive darkness because the light from the television light went out and we scrambled to safety. All hell broke loose. I dimly remember my staff man getting between me and a very angry black man with a knife. We fell over one another trying to get out. When we finally scrambled to safety, I turned to our hostess and said, "I thought you said it would be safe." Breathing heavily, she replied, "Well, I didn't know you were going to make it into a TV special either."

Mr. Chairman, you and I cannot possibly know the frustration that woman feels when she detoxifies an addict and then has to send him back into the same conditions that fostered the addiction in the first place: poverty, unemployment, tenements infested with rats, drug pushers on every corner.

Mr. Chairman, things do not appear to be getting any better. I have heard recent reports that young kids are shifting from the use of drugs alone to mixing them with alcohol.

I hear reports of young people who have to have a drink before they leave for school; who keep bottles stashed in their school lockers or cars; who share their pills at school, dumping them together to form a "fruit salad"; who, in addition, take Valium as casually as we take aspirin for the common cold. And, Senator, I am not talking about kids in the ghettos only, I am talking about kids like mine or like yours. And some parents are so concerned that their kids might get into trouble with the law by smoking a little pot that they actually encourage them to drink.

So I am also happy to learn that Senator Williams amended the law three years ago to include provisions to direct more attention to the young.

Mr. Chairman, I have been deeply involved with the problems of alcoholism - my own and others - for more than 30 years. If at times I sound like an angry and frustrated man, it is because I am. I see this great abundant land of ours with resources beyond compare. I see the wonderful achievements of our science and technology; the miracles of modern medicine; the explosive growth of knowledge in numberless areas; the marvelous exploits of American industry and our space programs. But I am sick to my soul by our response to alcoholism. And I am sick to my soul that even when we pass laws to help the alcoholic or the drug addict, we have remained blind to the illness that the alcoholism brings to the spouse or the young children in the family.

Mr. Chairman, it is not for nothing that the children of alcoholics are at high risk to develop alcoholism or other emotional disorders.

So what would I do now if I still sat in your chair? I would ask a lot of questions. I would ask:

Why do hospitals still discriminate against alcoholics and addicts despite laws we passed in 1974 to prevent that? What is wrong with our society that millions of our citizens, including children as young as six - yes, I said six - turn to alcohol or drugs to deaden their pain? Why are doctors so afraid of the word "alcoholism" that one of them told a member of your staff recently [Nancy Olson] that he would never ask her if she drank too much because she was "well-dressed?" And why, when an affluent alcoholic shows up in the office of a high-priced psychiatrist, does she so often wind up also addicted to Valium?

And I would ask:

Why is it that millions of women - at all social levels and of all races - suffer beatings, rapes, and worse from their drunken husbands and yet many times are too ashamed to call the police or tell their ministers? And why, when one does call the police, will the police not respond to a "domestic problem"? Why is it that children who are physically and sexually abused by their own fathers - often with the mother's cooperation - grow into men who do the same to their own children? And why is it that children of alcoholics often wind up in back wards of mental hospitals? And why is it that a little old woman, carrying all her worldly goods in two shopping bags, was refused her supplemental security income payments until a courageous doctor in New York - herself a recovered alcoholic - was able "to get her back into the system"? And while we're at it, why has that doctor talked to members of this staff over and over again only to be told "there is nothing we can do to help because it's not our jurisdiction?" Why is it that we turn our back on old people who are being over-medicated to make life easier for the staffs of nursing

homes? And why is it that no one has looked into helping bring alcoholism treatment to our elderly or our physically handicapped? And why has this same woman doctor begged again and again for that to change and still remain unheard? And why do our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee still provide three times the money for dental research as they do for alcoholism? Why are we unwilling to put warning labels on alcohol to warn pregnant women of the danger to their unborn children? And why did an advertising executive sarcastically accuse a member of your staff [Nancy Olson] of being a "neo-prohibitionist" and a "reincarnation of Carey Nation," when she quietly suggested that perhaps women were entitled to that information? Why, Senator - in God's name why? Why do we have to continue these ways and why do we have to continue crying out and remain unheard?

Mr. Chairman, my family often reminds me that I sometimes talk like the drunken truck driver I once was. Today, forgive me if I sound like I am preaching. But, Senator, I believe with all my heart that one day I will meet my Maker face to face. And on that day I do not believe that He will ask how many important offices I was elected to, nor how many acts of Congress bear my name, or even whether I went to church regularly. I believe that he will ask "What have you done unto the least of these?"

Mr. Chairman, I pray that I will have the right answer.

Usually, I wrote questions for the Chairman to ask each witness, but in my hurry to prepare for this hearing, I had forgotten to write questions for Senator Riegle to ask Senator Hughes.

"What should I ask him," he whispered to me.

"Why don't you ask him to tell his own story," I replied.

Senator Riegle was somewhat hesitant. "His alcoholism? I don't want to ask him about that.

I assured Senator Riegle that Hughes would not mind being asked.

Riegle asked several other questions first, but then said, beating around the bush a bit:

"There are a lot of people who think that the most important thing right now is to mandate a balanced budget.

"Without any regard necessarily to these more substantive and difficult questions, do you know what is the investment value of some of these expenditures that we might make? You have been down this road yourself. If you would be willing to do it, I think it would be very helpful if you could share some of those thoughts and insights with us. I think it would have great meaning, especially now, in today's climate."

Grinning broadly, Hughes replied: "You mean my own alcoholism, Senator?" He had told his own story countless times, at AA meetings, in meetings with prisoners, and in his autobiography, *The Man From Ida Grove*. He would tell the story countless times again, until his death in 1996. This is how he told it that day:

"I was an alcoholic, from the first drink I ever took in my life. I was an alcoholic as a teenager, in high school. I do not know what it is to drink normally ever....

"But alcohol is nothing but trouble for me, and it is a progressive illness for me, and in those days I had no idea that I was sick. It was the tough and manly thing to do, to drink with everyone. The fact that everyone else did not have lapses of memory and blackouts, I did not know. I thought perhaps I was the normal one.

"Hell, I was a healthy and powerful man in my younger years. I was able to withstand the brutal treatment that I gave my body.... But my drinking progressed through that, after high school, through the Army, my post-war years, and I finally began to realize that my drinking patterns were destructive. The people that I was hurting the most were those that I loved the most, my wife, my children, those immediately around me.

"I promised time and time again that I would quit, and every time I failed, and each time that I failed, my own self esteem went down, and I thought I was worthless in the world. I was working daily, and had as good a job as there was for a working man in the country, and to most on the outside, not really realizing the destruction within me, they were not aware of what was taking place. Even my own aunt said a month ago, "Harold, I did not know you were an alcoholic".

"Well, I did not know, either. People knew that I was a drunk, that I was wild, and I would fight, and that I was disruptive. The abuse that I brought on my own wife and family, though I did not beat them, the mental, the verbal abuse, the questions, the wondering whether I was alive or not, they went through for years. It was a rocky road, until one time my wife left me, she took the children and left.

"One day I woke up after a long time not drinking, having drunk again, and I did not know how long I had been drunk. And I was sick, and I was hopeless, and I crawled to the window, to look out to see if the car was there, and did not see it. I did not know whether I killed someone, where my wife or children were, and the only thing that came to me was, what is the use in going on. I do not want to live like this. If I cannot control what I am doing, then I did not want to live. I did not have any faith in God then. Mr. Chairman, I was not at all sure that there was a God. If there was a loving God, I had seen little example of him in what I had seen in life.

"The savagery in war, man's inhumanity to man, the statement that, who gave a damn to any of us, not anyone. That night I desperately decided that the only way that I could break the cycle of hurting my wife and family was to kill myself. It seemed the logical thing to do.

"My wife was still relatively young, my children were still relatively young, they would be hurt, but they were young. My wife had filed charges of inebriety, to put me in a mental institution. I had hired an attorney and beat that. I know the pain, the lonesomeness, the Godlessness of waking up and saying what the hell is the use, no one cares. I cannot hack it any more.

"So I loaded a gun, lay on the bed, and put the barrel in my mouth, and found that I could reach the trigger with the thumb, and then I thought, well, what a mess I will make in the bedroom where we have lived, and had some happy hours, screwed up alcoholic thinking. I do not want to make that mess here. I will go in the bathroom.

"So I got up and went in the bathroom, and suddenly something out of my youth came back, and I thought well, maybe if there is a God, I should pray. I know I should not commit suicide. I knew it was wrong. I had been raised in the church but I did not care if I had to pay the price of hell, and eternity. I would have paid to quit hurting my family.

"So I knelt on the floor to pray, and I cried out in my agony - because I knew no words of prayer - God help me because I cannot help myself. ... Or let me die, because I do not want to see the sun rise again.

"Something happened in me. I do not know what it was. But tears started streaming down my face. I got a great sense of peace entering into my body, and seemingly into every cell, and I was on that floor weeping, I do not know how long, an hour or more, I guess. But I realized suddenly that God was somewhere, that he had heard my prayer, and cared about me. I got up from that floor. I did not know much about God. I unloaded the gun, and put it away, and went back to bed and slept peacefully for the first time in weeks, perhaps months.

"When I arose in the morning, I called my wife, and asked her if she would come home. She had no reason to. She should have stayed away, by my old drinking record, but she sensed something, apparently, in my voice, and she returned and brought the children back, and started over again.

"Mr. Chairman, that was 25 years ago last month. There was not sudden relief from the pain, the suffering and the affliction. There was a long period of growth and loneliness, and desperation. But in the years that intervened, I found the peace that I had never known. I found it because I returned to that which I had strayed away from. The Scripture, the word, my church, my family, and recommitted my life to Jesus Christ in the hope and the belief that wherever he called I would follow.

"I believe that he called me into the political arena, I believe that he called me out. I placed my life in his hands, because in my own it was death, it was hell, and it was destruction."

Senator Riegle seemed deeply moved by Hughes' story and began to respond. But Hughes interrupted him because he wanted to correct something he had said:

"Mr. Chairman, I want to correct something that I said in my emotion. I made a mistake. That was 27 years go, not 25, and I drank again after that incident, two years later, and got drunk again. But I never drank after that last time.

"Now, many times we consider people who are sick with this illness, who have what we call a slip, failures; they are not failures.

"If you break the cycle of drinking that a man or woman has had for years, and he is sober for 30 days, or 60 days, or 6 months, and he drinks again and then he sobers up again for a year, and then drinks again, and then he sobers up and does not drink for the rest of his life, he's not a failure. I had a friend who was in jail

360-some times, who was considered hopeless by every friend. He has now been sober for over 15 years, and a fine engineer. But there is no failure and there is no hopelessness that I know, except the failure of us to forgive, and to try again to have faith that they can make it."

Before he left the witness table he asked Riegle if he could make just one more comment:

Mr. Chairman may I make one last statement briefly, and I know you are busy with these hearings, and I do not want to detain you, but in my lifetime, and in my service in the capacity that you are now in, I never at any time desired to take \$1 from the field of mental retardation or the afflicted in any way. I do not want to deny our society of the help they so desperately need, whether it be in dental research, or in any other way, but I believe a society as wealthy and rich as we are in this Nation, cannot afford to leave other segments of illness untreated.

I am asking for additional money. We dress so well, and eat so well, there is no society in history that has ever lived that has had such abundance. How can we ignore the sick in our midst and let them die in the hell that they live in, without giving them health care.

We must be concerned and care for the least of these in our midst. Not simply because it is cost effective, but because it is right, because it is just, and because it is morally sound.

I do believe that God cares about nations and people, and I believe he does care how we treat one another. To lay down our lives for one another does not mean that we live in abundance while others have little or nothing because of an illness.

My God, we spend so much in the destructive elements of our world. We coerce so much of our resources into destruction and killing, and the machinery of destruction. I am not privy to the intelligence or the needs in our society, and our international affairs today in these areas, but I know that man has never failed to use those instruments of destruction. But once he builds them, he uses them. But I know that if there is a counter spiritual balance in all of this, that it has to be in the compassionate hearts of men. There is no compassionate bending in the law. It has to be men like yourself, and your colleagues, who care and feel the hurt of others.

Senator, I hope you feel the pain of those that you are serving so that you can serve them well.

Senator Riegle replied that Hughes could "be sure that this subcommittee is in this fight to stay. We will call again on your counsel and your support, and your prayers, as well, because this is work that we do together."

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You will have them all. Thank you," Hughes replied.

Jay Lewis, reporting on the hearing in "Alcoholism Report," said: "When the former Iowa Governor and Senator completed his emotionally charged testimony, a round of applause broke out in the hearing room - a rare occurrence on Capitol Hill."

Many followed Hughes out of the room when finished testifying to talk with him in the hall. Hugh Gallagher, who had not met Senator Hughes before, phoned me the next day to thank me for having insisted that he come to the hearing "I just wanted to thank my friend. And you are my friend," he said.