

this Malibu place to myself. I was into comic books – the X-Men, I was fanatical about them – and I loved skateboarding and surfing, living on the beach. But you know, I had no direction, and looking back on it, I see it wasn't such a good thing, because I really needed to be parented and held responsible and talked to. There was nobody there."

At 14 he ran away from home. At 15 he was living on the streets of Hollywood. "Hollywood Boulevard was just crazy. I mean, instead of tourists like they have now, the streets were full of people from all over the country – runaways, drinkers, druggers – just people partying. It was a Hotel California-type of life going on down there."

David and his young friends were targets for abuse and exploitation. "There was that predatory thing. You know, trollers, chickenhawks, pedophiles. All of that was in full swing, like it was the norm, it was almost acceptable behavior."

David recalls one horrifying ordeal, when a man coaxed him home to his Highland Boulevard mansion with the promise of work, then locked him in, cut him with a box knife, and held him for hours, threatening to do much worse. "I was just trying to figure out, at my young age, I was thinking, 'OK, I can just be this guy's friend, and as long as he doesn't put his hands on me, I think I might be able to get out of this.'"

But when he saw an opportunity, he went for it.

"He was in his bathroom, and I just ran down this huge flight of stairs that looked like something out of a Hollywood movie, and I got to the door, and there were eight locks on it, and I'm clicking them and I'm turning them, and before I can get the door open he comes running down behind me and puts the knife to my neck and yells, 'You shouldn't have done that!'"

Somehow David talked his captor down and got free. At a hospital, he reported the incident to the police, but the man had money and connections. "He claimed self defense, claimed I had attacked him, and the fact that I was a runaway?" He shakes his head. "The DA refused to press charges."

Several years later, David got a call from a Louisiana district attorney. His attacker had relocated there and stood accused of raping two 16-year-old boys at gunpoint. The DA wanted David to fly out and testify.

"I didn't make the flight because I was high, I couldn't get there, get to the airport, what have you." He sighs, running his fingers through his cropped brown hair. "The DA called and said he was convicted on all counts. He'll never see the light of day."

David's father wanted to help – and did so in subsequent years. David remembers visiting him in New York in 2002, and being dazzled by his corner office in the Empire State Building. But when he looks closely at their relationship now, David sees negative patterns.

"As I spiraled downwards in my addiction, my father tried to save me. He paid for apartments, paid my bills. Basically, I lived under his care. Ten years out here in

Portland, four different apartments I got evicted from, and he would just fly out here from New York and rent me another one. I mean, it gave me a sense of entitlement. Like, 'I don't have to work,' you know. 'I'm a spoiled brat, I'm special, so...' All I did was get loaded all the time, and I would lie to my father and manipulate him for money. He was aware of my abuse issues, and he felt a lot of guilt because he wasn't there to stop it. So it was a very unhealthy relationship that I had with my dad all those years."

But even his father's patience finally reached an end.

"Four years ago I got another eviction notice, and my dad set up another apartment and he even sent people over with a truck to help me move, and you know I didn't even answer the door? I was so drunk, so completely out of my mind. So I didn't move out on the day I was supposed to, which meant my dad owed all this back money. He called over to the new apartment and told them to just tear up the check, he was done." Then the date of his eviction came. "The manager locked me out of my apartment, told me I could no longer go in there, he changed the locks. All I had on me was the clothes on my back. It was the Fourth of July."

Independence Day. There was finally nothing between David and rock bottom.

"Thank God that happened, because then I found myself living on the street, and the two years I was out there were rough, man. I just drank, day in and day out. I didn't care about myself or my life. You know, falling down, getting beat up, broken ribs, OD'ing, and just not caring about anything, just trying to blot out this reality, blot out the fact I couldn't take responsibility for myself and I couldn't change. I was trapped in my addiction. It was horribly dark."

Sometimes in this darkness, he'd sense something else there. "I used to get these communications. I'd wake up in the field, early in the morning, and I'd hear the crows, and it was so quiet, I could hear the grass grow. I knew there was something going on. But when all you're thinking about is getting your next beer, you don't really take that to heart. You're just like, 'I'm on this treadmill, I don't have time for feelings, I don't have time for you, I don't have time for me.'"

David's recovery began with a visit to Good Samaritan Hospital's psych ward – not his first. "I would claim I was suicidal, which I was, and they would admit me and they would have to medically detox me, and I would have a few days to just be off the street. I had done this probably a dozen times, but this last time, I'd like to say it was a decision I made, but I didn't really believe I could do it."

From the hospital, David was given the chance to move to the Blanchet Farm, a facility in Carlton, Ore., run by Blanchet House, where men in recovery raise chickens and pigs, tend the garden, and do woodworking, away from the temptations of the city. "I stayed there for 4 1/2 months, working with animals and living on the farm and basically trying to gather my thoughts

and my bearings together about what if anything I could do with my life. There was nothing left of me, really. I was completely defeated. I had been out there panhandling for beer money for two years. It's a reality I wouldn't wish on anyone."

From Blanchet Farm, David moved to Blanchet House on Northwest Glisan and started going to Narcotics Anonymous. "I knew that recovery worked for a lot of people, all the way from Malibu, you know, in every walk of life, recovery has worked for hardcore addicts and alcoholics, so I felt like this was my only chance, and I jumped into it, day by day, meeting after meeting, and challenge after challenge. I just faced it. I came to terms with my life. I took responsibility – this, this is what I've done. And then I could begin to piece together why things happened this way, and I couldn't blame my mom, and I couldn't blame this person or that person. I just really had to own it."

David covers his face with his hands, coming to this point in his story. He needs a minute or two. No, he doesn't need a hug. He takes a deep breath.

"So, like, this is where the God piece comes in for me. I humbly asked God to remove my shortcomings, to forgive me, to relieve all the guilt and shame I've felt all my life. I asked. And I got it, man. And in that first year I found I had to do something. I wanted to show God that I loved Him. I didn't just want to say it; I wanted to do something. And I thought, 'You know, I can feed people, I can go out there and feed people.'"

So, six or seven nights a week, for an entire year, David fed people who were struggling just as he had.

"I would make sandwiches, 15 to 20 sandwiches a night, and coffee, juice and cookies, and I'd bag it up and take it out and just hand it to people in doorways and I'd talk to them and I'd get to know them. You know, I didn't have much to give except for this sandwich. But it was so humbling, and I needed that kind of humility, because I didn't have it, I was just a spoiled rich kid. Even though I'd been on the streets, I still had these entitlement issues."

David's life has gotten busy since then. He's cashiering and pumping gas 36 hours a week, and thanks to the Humanity In Perspective program, he's on his way into higher education. "It's opened my eyes so much to what I didn't know about life. You know, the art, the literature, the philosophy – philosophy has just triggered my mind. It just felt like an explosion in my head, I was like, 'Yes, this is what it's all about.'"

David Prescott still tries to get out and deliver food when he can. Once a week, maybe, if he can manage, he'll head out there with his bag full of sandwiches.

"I feel God sent me out there to tell people that He loves them. If they want to know about my story, I'm willing to tell them how I did it, but that's kind of like in one ear and out the other. They've heard it before, or they're just not ready. So really what I want to say is that God is with you. That's why I'm here, to tell you that."

To support and connect with the programs at Blanchet House, visit www.blanchethouse.org.

To learn more about Humanity In Perspective, visit the Oregon Humanities website, www.oregonhumanities.org/programs/humanity-in-perspective.