



Born in Alabama, Roy moved to Texas when he was 5 years old, settling in a small town on the rural outskirts of Austin. Roy attended school, graduated and went on to training and working in the world of auto mechanics, got married and had a son.

In 2008, Roy decided to move to Austin, putting in for a transfer with his job. His brother offered him a place to live while he got settled in Austin, however all did not go as planned. "For one reason or another", he says, "the transfer didn't go through and my brother went back on his offer of letting me stay with him. I was suddenly without work and without a place to live."

Taking it all in stride, Roy decided he would live on what he had in the bank until it ran out, taking a forced vacation until he went back to work. Eventually the money ran out, and again Roy found himself without a place to live and without a job. Looking for a way out, he went to the day labor office in search of any work he could get. Though he was able to get work, he describes his experience as terrible with "very little pay, and no respect. I made just enough to go back the next day."

Continuing to work day labor jobs, Roy and two other men lived behind the day labor center on the loading dock, making it easier to snag jobs every morning. It was during this year that he and the others began using crack cocaine, gradually increasing their use until it snowballed into a full blown addiction. Eventually the three men decided to pool their resources and rent a motel room to live in. For a year they lived together, using crack every day, "just enough to get by" Roy says.

The cycle of drugs and drinking continued until Roy decided that he couldn't take it anymore. "I got sick of the living situation. Waking up every morning hating what I'd done the night before." It was then that Roy decided to move to a motel room on his own, continuing to work day labor jobs but away from the drugs and the dope dealers he knew. Everything Roy earned from day labor went to the child support he owed or the cost of the motel room he lived in, leaving him little else to live on.

This new motel room afforded Roy the ability to see his son from time to time, with the help of his parents and the cooperation of his ex-wife. Despite his having gotten away from the drugs, Roy was still drinking on a semi-routine basis, which eventually led to his losing it all, again. Three months after moving out on his own, Roy was on the verge of getting full time employment with the company that hired him as a day laborer. "It was a great opportunity", he says "helping remodel Target stores all over the country." Roy was fired from the day labor job for going to work half drunk and was "too ashamed and embarrassed to go back and try for another job. I just never went back."

With no money Roy could no longer afford the motel room so he packed his stuff, deciding to live in the woods by himself. Roy's daily routine was to wake up and walk to a gas station to use their microwave to heat up some soup, then on to another gas station to bathe in the bathroom sink, and then go to a Walgreens so he could shave. "I didn't want to look like I was living in the woods" he says of his daily routine.

Roy camped in the woods for a year and a half, cycling through the days just trying to survive both his homelessness and his alcoholism. "I started to ask myself 'what am I doing? How am I going to get back to being a real person again?'"

One hot morning in August of 2012, Roy was finishing his shift at a food pantry and left to drop off groceries and birthday presents he had bought for his son. He admits that he had been drinking, and thought he deserved another drink for his efforts. He bought a bottle of vodka and headed to the grassy embankment overlooking Mopac Expressway at the intersection of Parmer Lane. "I got really drunk" sitting on the edge of the 25 foot embankment, "and I guess I decided to take a nap". When he woke up he was surrounded by paramedics with no idea what was going on or what had happened. He was laying on the access road to Mopac expressway, having fallen 25 feet onto the cement below. His femur was broken at the knee, his kneecap shattered and his pelvis was broken in 3 places. "It's a miracle that I even survived" Roy says of his accident.

Roy was in the hospital for 5 days, fearing what would happen next. The hospital contacted his family but they were unable to help. With no insurance and no means of affording the ongoing care he would need to recover from his accident, Roy was unsure what his next move would be. The hospital social worker contacted Front Steps to see if there might be an opportunity for Roy to enter the nursing home environment that the organization's Recuperative Care Program (RCP) offered. "I was willing to do anything it took, to have somewhere to go. If I could have gone to a jail infirmary, I would have."

Roy has been participating in RCP for seven months, having made tremendous progress towards his sobriety, his physical recovery and his living situation. After exiting the nursing home after five months, Roy now lives in the Recuperative Care transitional home, with three other residents. Together with Front Steps team, a care plan was created to help him achieve his goal of living independently. "We work on the issues that led me to living in the woods, so that I can learn to move on." Roy volunteers two days a week with the nursing home where he was a patient, attends narcotics anonymous and Goodwill classes on a regular basis, working towards employment. "It's very rewarding and the residents and staff treat me like a celebrity. The staff is happy to see me. It's kind of a weird feeling. No one was every happy to see me before."

Aside from achieving seven months of sobriety and the ability to heal in a safe and stable environment, Roy says that his experience with the Front Steps Recuperative Care Program has given him an opportunity to put his life back together. "It took an accident to force me to change my ways, and it was the best thing that ever happened to me."

Today, Roy is employed by that same nursing home where he volunteered. The nursing home administrator approached Roy and asked if he would be interested in a job, doing the same things he had been doing as a volunteer. "I was in shock. I was excited; it's the closest thing I'd had to a real job in years. It feels like I'm becoming a real person again – something to be proud of."