

I was raised in Minnesota, but maybe the place to start my story is in New Orleans—that’s where I ended up falling into homelessness. I lost my home and a \$60,000-a-year job because of my drinking. That was on June 11th. On June 12th I sobered up.

I hadn’t seen my dad or any of my family for eleven years so I decided to come back to Minnesota. I paid all my bills and I had to buy the bus ticket seven days in advance so I could afford it. Now I had seven days to wait and nowhere to stay. I went to the Gulf Coast Christian Mission. That was one of the best weeks of my life because all I did was pray. When I got on the bus I had \$1.70, three changes of clothes, and no fear.

I got to Minneapolis and found my way to St. Stephen’s Shelter. Christmas morning I called my dad—he’s ninety-one years old. He started crying and said, “We thought one of two things: either you were dead or in prison.”

What the shelter has given me is an opportunity to get my base foundation. What that means to me is I don’t have to worry about finances, food, laundry; all I have to worry about is following the rules and using it the way it’s set up: as a stepping stone to get back into life. The shelter was really a godsend.

I got the “Laundry Man” job in the shelter, went to AA and got a sponsor, got an apartment. Then the first real job I applied for, I got because I was honest about my past and about living in a shelter. I was up front and they give me a chance and hired me as store manager.

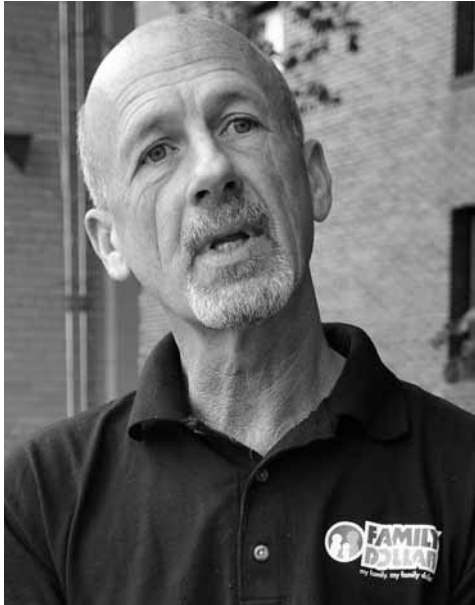
I always worked hard. I wasn’t the kid with the silver spoon. I mowed lawns, vacuumed old ladies’ carpets. I also peddled quarter-pounds of dope in the 6th grade on my bicycle. Smoking and drinking and nobody cared; I’d go home drunk, nobody ever noticed. I wasn’t important.

You know, hopelessness is a terrible feeling. I just thank Jesus for giving me the knowledge of what I have to do to survive.

# Fred



**St. Stephen’s Shelter** has room each night for forty-four men who are experiencing homelessness. Advocates work with shelter guests on securing housing and employment and addressing other issues such as mental health and addiction.



Fred outside the store he manages.

Opposite page: Fred folding laundry when he was staying in St. Stephen's Shelter.

