

Author and Licensed Drug and Alcohol Counselor Ronnie M. Palmer Recently Featured on Close Up Radio

PITTSBURG, CA, UNITED STATES, September 8, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ronnie Palmer spent close to three years sleeping on cardboard and lining up for one of a handful of weekly showers in San Francisco. Mornings always started with the same questions: "Where will I find food, cash for today's fix, and a dry place to sleep before dark?" In his new memoir "Finishing Stronger," the now licensed drug and alcohol counselor argues that the missing piece for most of the homeless is not motivation. Rather, daily structure is the key that must be taught before anyone can possibly leave the streets.



When Palmer was only one month old, his then fourteen-year-old mother left him on a couch in a hospital lobby. Adopted by two alcoholics, he grew up in a home defined by drinking and abuse. After they divorced, Palmer spent four years living with his adopted mother who turned to addiction and prostitution. At fourteen, he chose to live with his father who had remarried. Palmer's new stepbrother, who played guitar in the Steve Miller Band, introduced Palmer to the 1960s rock scene and it was all downhill from there. He became a road manager for acts including the Steve Miller Band, Booker T and the MGs, Azteca and Quincy Jones. Only two weeks after landing in California, he tried heroin for the first time and kept going for the next thirty years.

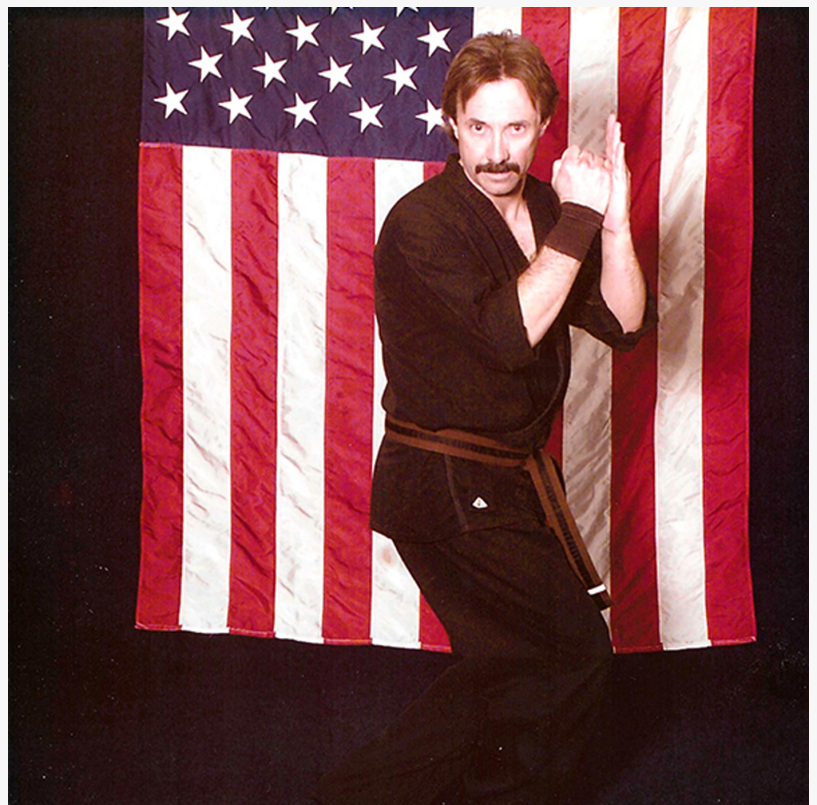
In 1999, Palmer got clean from heroin and methadone. By 2003, he developed a drinking problem so seriously, he needed a drink before getting out of bed in the morning. A few short weeks after driving to San Francisco with his dog and guitars packed in his truck, he was hit by a truck while crossing a street in the rain. To add literal insult to injury, his homeless neighbors,

assuming he was dead, robbed him while he was unconscious. He was left in the street to die with no ID, no money and no memory of his name.

What followed, Palmer explains, was close to three years without a fixed address. At the time, San Francisco had roughly 8,500 homeless residents and about 2,000 shelter beds. Getting into a drug and alcohol program required a referral, and he didn't know how to begin. After learning about a program for seniors, he applied but was waiting a year on the street as the program would not accept him until he turned 55. A doctor at San Francisco General Hospital finally gave him the referral he needed to get into that program.

For Palmer, everything changed once someone handed him a daily schedule. Waking up at the same time every day and taking a shower were unfamiliar habits he had to learn, like any other skill. That's when he realized the absence of any daily structure, not a lack of desire, kept him stuck in the spiral of addiction and homelessness. And this structure has to be taught, like reading and math, as most people on the streets were born into situations where daily structure was not a given.

After learning how to live a life with daily structure, Palmer enrolled at City College of San Francisco and earned his certification as a drug and alcohol counselor. By 2009, he had completed an internship at Options Recovery Services in Berkeley. That internship turned into a six year job. Now, he's teaching Tai Chi and leads a recovery group built around "The Four Agreements" by Don Miguel Ruiz at Alhambra Valley Retreat.

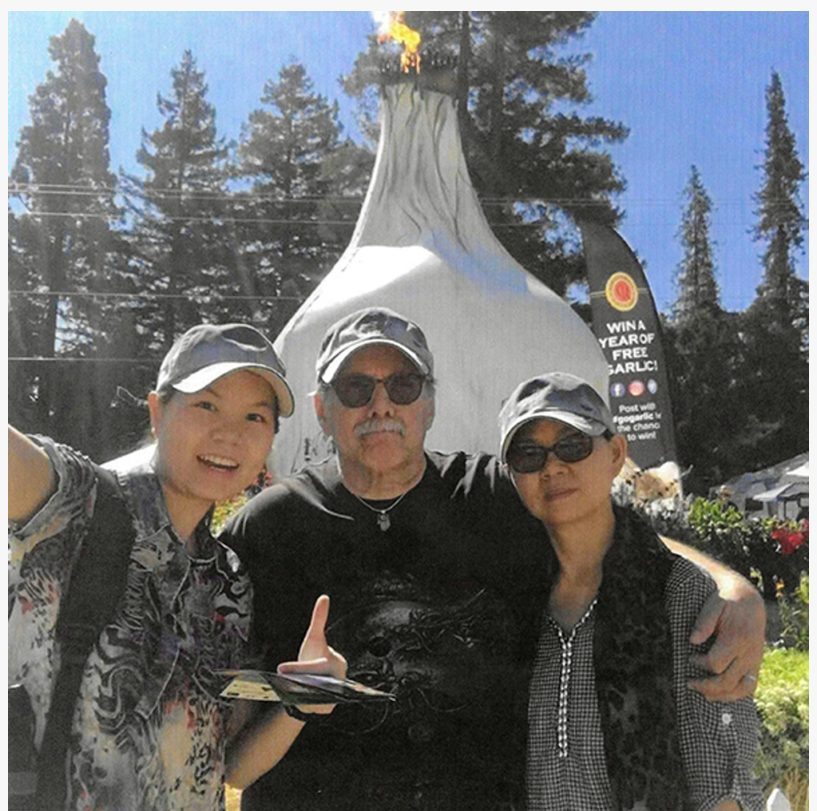


"The public believes homeless folks need a lecture about willpower, that they just have to pull themselves up by their bootstraps," Palmer says. "What they need is somewhere to be sheltered and somewhere to be at nine o'clock and then somewhere else to be at noon. Give a person a place to sleep, a reason to get up, facilities to clean up and eat in the morning, and the rest begins to follow. I lived without structure throughout my entire homeless life. Daily structure is the difference between staying on the street and getting your life together. It's not just about willpower; it's about education and life skills."

Palmer's memoir traces how learning a daily routine led to steady work which allowed him to purchase a home in Pittsburg after years of renting single rooms. Along the way came a marriage arranged through a friend in China and their daughter now holds a doctorate in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Palmer explains that he still tells the men and women in his recovery groups that "the surest path off the sidewalk starts with something as small as a set wake up time and a place to be."

He often repeats a saying attributed to Buddha: light a lamp for someone and it will brighten your own path. Palmer says the people who built structure around him, from counselors to doctors, gave him a model he now hands to his own clients, one appointment and small routine at a time.

About Ronnie Palmer



Ronnie Palmer is a licensed drug and alcohol counselor based in the San Francisco Bay Area. A former road manager for the Steve Miller Band, Booker T and the MGs, Azteca and Quincy Jones, Palmer spent thirty years as a heroin user, then another seven years as an alcoholic, and close to three years homeless in San Francisco before entering recovery in 2006. He earned his counseling credentials at City College of San Francisco, worked for six years at Options Recovery Services in Berkeley, and now is the Program Coordinator and teaches Tai Chi and a Four Agreements based recovery group at Alhambra Valley Retreat. His new memoir is titled "Finishing Stronger," where he makes the case that daily structure is what the homeless need to get off the streets. That is just the start.

Close Up Radio recently featured Ronnie M. Palmer, author, in an interview with Jim Masters on Friday September 4th at 3pm Eastern

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For more information about Ronnie M. Palmer, please visit <https://authorronniepalmer.com/>

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