



A Cowboy's Observations:
On Drugs?

By

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NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

This essay is a work of opinion. I recently read it is a mistake for an author to interject opinion into his or her work. That makes no sense to me. Are we to be mindless sheep with no convictions? If you do not want to hear an opinion, read no further, If however, you are the type that can consider another's opinion, accept what rings true, and discard the rest, read on.

The essays are short. I don't see any reason to waste your time or mine with a bunch of filler. The subject matter is one that I am intimately familiar with. I was a relatively major marijuana smuggler and grower and I am sure there are people in this country smoking dope I helped get started on the habit. I have children that have battled with addictions, some that still succumb. (One of my children, by last count, has been arrested thirteen different times on charges involving possession of illegal substances.) I routinely meet others who ask how I quit. I wish not to speak down on you, but rather to speak as one with you, struggling through problems of drug addiction. In spite of the fact that I have not used marijuana, cocaine, or alcohol for sixteen years now, I still wrestle with a personality prone to addictive behavior.

This work is part of my penance. I write this not only for the addict and his or her family, but also for those well-intentioned people in the fight to save our country from this affliction, trapped in a dysfunctional system.

In reference to the title, some may ask, why do you call yourself a cowboy?

I once heard a cowboy's philosophy stated as follows: Why walk when you can ride? Why stand when you can sit? And, why sit, when you can lie down?

By this standard, unfortunately, I qualify.

A COWBOY'S OBSERVATIONS ON ADDICTION

Chapter I

At AA meetings, participants are required to stand and say, *I am an alcoholic*, or *I am an addict*. To me these are statements of defeat. While I may be addicted, I am not an addict. I am a living, breathing human, with the ability to change, by the grace of God.

Before anyone gets on a high horse, looking down at a group of people struggling with addictions, the following should be considered: We all struggle with addictions. We are addicted to food, sleep, sex, TV, driving, love, religion, computers, and who knows what else; each of us has his own. Not all addictions are bad by definition; the same standard does not apply to all. I've heard it said: *one man's ceiling is another man's floor*.

Let me describe the qualifications I have for being so bold to suppose that I can effectively address this subject. Were it not for the two cups of coffee I drank this morning, I would be groggily headed toward a headache, and finding some way to get caffeine into my system. Had I not had sex sometime within the last week, I might very well be tempted to use this computer to surf the Internet looking for images of naked women for jack off material. If these aren't enough reasons to qualify me, then consider this:

I once was so heavily addicted to marijuana that I grew the stuff; dealt in it, in order to pay for my habit, and when a time came where there was none to be found in the circles I inhabited, I drove all the way into Mexico, scouring the country, looking for my precious herb. My first effort got me arrested and tortured. Not to be denied, I went right back down there and persisted in the hunt. Eventually, I found some. I then proceeded to smuggle it, risking life and limb, surviving seven arrests in Mexico and two here in the United States. After serving four months of my first prison sentence in the U.S., I

escaped from prison, fled to Mexico, and lived the life of a fugitive in a part of Mexico so remote and backward, not even poor starving Mexicans want any part of it. They refer to this region as the *despoblado*. *Despoblado* means unpopulated. There is a reason for this. One thing the *despoblado* did have was marijuana—considerably more than was available at the federal prison I left behind. At that time, that was enough for me. (Oddly enough, every prison I ever saw, and I saw a lot of them, did have a supply.)

My typical day as a pothead, prior to this time, started in bed, smoking the joint I rolled the night before. Of course the last thing I had done *before* going to bed was to smoke a joint. Around midmorning, I burned another, if there was any way to do so, and I tended to be very good at assuring there would be. Before and after lunch were prime times: before to give me an appetite, after to get my head right for the afternoon tasks at hand. Mid-afternoon presented another opportunity to smoke more, and then there were the required before and after supper joints. The typical evening tended to be an opportunity to gather with others of similar persuasion and really do some smoking—perhaps on a bong or any other number of devices designed to more effectively introduce smoke into our bodies.

I planned my day around these events, and if something unimportant came along, like perhaps seeing to the needs of my family (yes, I had a family all through this), I usually managed to work it into the schedule.

I avoided being around people who did not share my addiction. Light has a way of shining on darkness in a painfully uncomfortable way; I found comfort surrounding myself with others of similar persuasion, discomfort around those who didn't smoke. My parents, while struggling with addictions of their own, had no illegal addictions and highly disapproved of marijuana use, so I avoided them. When mandatory attendance was required, I smoked right before going to their house, shot my eyes full of Visine, sprayed Ozium in the vehicle I happened to be driving, and maybe even went so far as to apply a dose of

cologne. I doubt this fooled anybody. My discomfort would grow as the day wore on, until I finally came up with an excuse to leave. Before I got a block away from the house, I would be smoking, and the tension would drain from my body as fast as the smoke poured into my lungs. Does this sound familiar to any of you out there?

There were times in my experience when no dope was to be found. I would be on the phone—driving—calling—searching my mind for that one other person that might still have some, and might be willing to share or sell. And others like me were out doing the same.

When I bought pot, I would clean the smokeable material somewhat haphazardly and save the seeds and stems. On occasions when there was none to be had, I would re-clean these seeds and stems. When things got really bad, I would re-clean them and I wasn't above cleaning them a third time if I thought there might be a wisp of smokeable material left. Bongs, pipes, and other paraphernalia collect resins—black, nasty looking stuff. In really desperate times I would dig out this gunk and find some way to smoke it again. Mad searches through couches, ashtrays, seat cushions, and cars; looking for *roaches*, were not uncommon. (I hope I am not giving any of you ideas you haven't considered.)

The era I am describing is mid to late seventies and early eighties. While I am sure there are those among you who feel you invented what you do, age will teach that there is nothing under the sun that hasn't been tried, or closely approximating what you do. My hope is that you will hear and learn from me and others like me without having to torture yourself so much. Some of you won't. Probably most of you won't.

For those of you that have tried or currently do use marijuana and other drugs, both legal and illegal, my words may be of some help. While we're at it, did I mention that marijuana was not the only illegal substance I became addicted to?

CHAPTER II

Cocaine and I had a brief but tumultuous affair that damned near sent me to an early grave. Some say that they got addicted the first time they tried the stuff. That isn't the way it worked with me. The first time I tried it, I was working for a roofing company in Abilene, Texas. One of my co-workers and fellow pot smokers told me he had some. At the time, cocaine was considered *the rich man's drug*, and was gaining popularity among the rich and elite. I was curious to see what might be so attractive about this *new drug*. I bought a gram for a very hard-earned hundred-dollar bill, took it home and snorted the whole thing with my wife at the time. Boy was I disappointed! My nose got numb. I felt like I had a big booger caught in the back of my throat that refused to be swallowed, but there was very little high associated with the experience. I easily swore off the stuff. What I didn't realize was that what we bought and snorted had very little cocaine in it.

Years later, I would change my stance on the subject.

I showed up in Southern Oregon with a load of Mexican marijuana I had smuggled at the house of a friend-buyer-seller-kind of guy, who just happened to have cocaine, fresh off a boat from Colombia. When it was offered, being free, I decided to try again, just in case there was something I missed the first time around. There was. I fell in love!

The stuffed up nose and booger I couldn't swallow was there again, but this time came a sense of euphoria I had never before experienced. Now, quickly, before any of you run out to try some of this shit, take my word for it—this is an experience best never had. Let me say this one more time for those of you hard of hearing—*this is an experience best never had!*

I left Oregon for Texas, which is home for me, and one of the first things I did was to run out and buy what among dopers is known as an *eight ball*. An eight ball is three and one half grams, or one eighth of an ounce, typically several days to a week's supply for an average user. My wife at the time and I

snorted the whole thing in one night, and then I madly went out in search of more.

I must reveal some things at this point that are difficult to talk about, those private things most everybody has done but don't want anybody to know about, like accidentally shitting your pants, or masturbating—especially when you get to be an old bastard that isn't supposed to any more, or cussing. I made the awful mistake of having sex while high on cocaine.

I tend to be one of those five-minute-max-kind-of-guys where sex is concerned. Cocaine aroused and numbed me at the same time, releasing an avalanche of stored endorphins, which introduced me to a level of sexual pleasure previously unexplored in my young life. Take your best orgasm and multiply it by ten. Take five minutes and turn it into an extended hour, or two, or maybe even three, of extended sexual pleasure.

Now, quickly, once again, before any of you run out and buy some of the stuff—I swear it ain't worth it!

Many times when people counsel others on the use of drugs, all they talk about is the bad stuff. To a user, this automatically discredits the speaker. Wake up people. If there wasn't something intensely pleasurable about the experience, why would anybody go to such great lengths, sacrificing nearly everything they own, sadly even their lives sometimes, to get the God damned stuff into their bodies? It would be easy to ignore.

One of the terrible things about cocaine is that the person that has never before tried it will most probably experience the greatest pleasure with its initial use, due to a huge store of underused endorphins sitting, waiting to be released. Its affect however is short lived and the only way to maintain this very desirable feeling is to do some more. I'm not talking about a matter of hours. We're talking minutes here. For those who smoke the stuff, we're talking seconds.

Have you ever heard the saying *too much is not enough*? Well, too much cocaine is not enough. The feeling it produces

is so desirable that the user will continue to do more and more and more and more and more and more ...until the darker side of the drug begins to present itself. You just can't quite get back to that first wonderful place. And then, way on down the road, when all these endorphins are used up, bad things happen. Like depression—deep, dark, ugly depression. Like your heart racing to the point that in the worst of cases will kill you.

Did you know that your heart can beat so fast that it no longer moves enough blood to keep you alive—in an endless spasm of sorts—endless that is until the life sustaining oxygen contained in the blood flowing from your heart to your lungs and then to your brain no longer arrives and you die? Then your heart relaxes.

Obviously, I never reached that point. I saw another guy get there. It was not a pretty sight.

I say that I saw this. The truth is, it happened in a prison where I resided—Texarkana FCI. I did not witness all of it, for we were forced to go to our cells while they worked on the young man.

The man was black, in his early twenties I would guess. He was an athlete, good enough to make the all-star team of our inter-prison softball team. One evening, after playing a game against an outside-the-fence visiting team, this young man snorted a shit load of cocaine, and then took a shower. After showering, he did some more. And then, he fell to the floor. Other inmates immediately notified a guard and a physician's assistant arrived in a matter of minutes. He determined that the young man's heart was not beating properly, applied a defibrillator and shocked him. A normal heartbeat returned. The physician's assistant was relieved.

Then the cocaine went back to work. The man's heart rate accelerated again, to the point that it wasn't pumping at all. They shocked him again. I'm sure his body jumped. The heartbeat returned. So did the coke. Another shock. The point came where the shocks no longer worked, and the numbness this inmate sought became permanent. I saw his body leave on

a stretcher. If you ever experience something like this, it will not be easily forgotten.

Most people who use cocaine obviously don't go that far with it, but most will get very close if they flirt with it long enough. Have you ever watched moths circle a light bulb, looking for this bright light? For them, there must be some reward expected there, but the reality is, if they get close enough to getting this perceived reward, their wings get burned off. Coke addicts tend to resemble those moths.

One of the other side effects of cocaine use is intense paranoia. The average cocaine user locked into a room at night will probably go to the window a hundred times, just to make sure nobody is out there. Crystal meth also causes this phenomenon, but that is a topic for another time. Right now we're talking cocaine.

I can remember going to a motel room in Midland, Texas with several ounces of cocaine, some of which a part of me wanted to sell. Another part of me would have just as soon snorted *all* of it. I settled in for the night, after calling my friend-buyer-seller kind of guy, and proceeded to snort as much as I could stand while waiting. I got up to look out the window, and saw the car of a Texas Highway Patrolman.

I almost shit my pants. I grabbed the coke and headed for the bathroom. Thinking to myself, *they ain't gonna get it all!* I cut up another huge line; not being too particular about getting it chopped up finely, and snorted more. No cops came. I snuck back to the window. Now there were more cop cars. *Holy shit!* Back to the bathroom. I spent the entire night repeating this scenario. Somehow it didn't kill me. Before the night was over, the parking lot was full of cop cars.

The next morning, the cops still had not come to get me. And then they began to leave. Finally, the parking lot was empty. I stayed holed up all that day, afraid to call my friend. My phone was surely bugged. That evening, they showed up again, and I spent another night pacing between the bathroom and the window, doing line after line of cocaine. Once again,

morning arrived, and the cops left.

I finally decided to call my friend. Cryptically, I told him what had happened.

“Where are you staying?” he asked.

I told him.

“Are you aware that the regional office for the Texas Department of Safety is next door?”

“You’re shitting me!”

“No sir, I am not.”

Enough said. Cocaine use causes paranoia. While some may allege the fact it is illegal is what causes this effect, and that may be partially true—being a stimulant, cocaine causes extreme nervousness and agitation, to the point of physical shaking. That has nothing to do with illegality.

Other bad effects I remember include, but are not limited to: nosebleeds, loss of appetite, weight loss, inability to sleep, which in and of itself causes other problems. Addiction to the drug can consume your life to the point that you ignore all the other things you should be paying attention to like: family, job, country, hygiene, etc...

For a long time it was said that cocaine is not addictive. Personally, I am of the opinion that it is one of the most addictive substances on the face of this planet. Perhaps there are not the physical withdrawal symptoms like those of tobacco, alcohol, or heroin, but the mind can be addicted while the body isn’t, and this type of addiction can be the most difficult to break.

I could go on and on about the effects of cocaine and tell story after story about the way it destroyed my life, but that is not the purpose of this writing. For those of you struggling with cocaine addiction, I have some good news; it can be overcome.

CHAPTER III

If you are in the position of helping others with their addictions and under the illusion that you are somehow better than those you help, I have news for you.

Your shit stinks just like everybody else's.

In my opinion, the two most abused and harmful drugs of choice in our country just happen to be legal. If you think for one moment you can counsel your kids about drug abuse with a drink in your hand, or while smoking a cigarette, think again. Your words will fall on their ears like so much shit in the bottom of a latrine, and the smell won't be much better either.

We've all heard the statistics. Tobacco kills more people each year than alcohol, all illegal drugs, car wrecks and shootings combined. Second on this infamous list is alcohol. When you consider that a large portion of the wrecks and shootings on the list also involve alcohol, its prominence really emerges.

Why we tolerate a system that imprisons our own for use of some harmful substances and largely ignores and sometimes even encourages the use of others is beyond me. If you don't think alcohol use is encouraged, ask a freshman in college how hard it is to just say no when his fraternity or her sorority has a mandatory event. Ask the white-collar worker wishing to secure a business deal, often consummated in a bar, how far he'll get if he refuses to participate. Non-drinkers often find themselves excluded and even penalized in our society.

The judge, the lawyer, the prosecutor, the bailiff, the cop, and the prison guard sending somebody away for using or selling illegal drugs, most likely drink and/or smoke. If there is a final judgment administered by a just God, as many believe, I wouldn't want to be in their shoes.

Judge not lest you be judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged, and the measure you give, will be the measure you receive. To effectively judge and/or help others requires getting your own house in order. You want your kids to

stop doing drugs? Stop drinking. Stop smoking. You hate illegal drugs? Hate the legal ones also. Or, modify that hatred of the illegal ones a little. Outside of the fact that one is legal and the other not, there is little difference between the joint they smoke and the drink you take, especially if that drink happens to be accompanied by a cigarette.

Everybody has heard how alcohol causes car wrecks. Hardly a day goes by that the news does not remind us of that sad fact. There is not a drug I know of that impairs judgment and motor skills more than alcohol. High levels of alcohol can put you down to the point where you cannot stand, leave you puking, blind, and spouting ridiculous bullshit to the point of absurdity. Some become violent and abusive under its influence. Each and every overdose kills brain cells. They don't grow back.

Having spent my share of time in various county jails over the years, I have personally witnessed the withdrawal symptoms of quite a few drugs. Heroin has a well-deserved reputation for violently savaging those who quit using it; but I am here to tell you that the withdrawal symptoms of a severe alcoholic are every bit as bad, if not worse than what a heroin addict goes through when deprived.

In the worst cases, these symptoms kill their victim, but this is rare. There are a lot of cases where the victim may wish he or she was dead. I've seen cold sweats, shaking, delusions, deliriums, convulsions, vomiting, severe headaches, loss of appetite, and more, lasting for days, weeks, and in one case, a month.

I have seen people quit drinking for months and fall to the lowest depths of their illness after mistakenly thinking they could take one drink. While what I describe is worst-case stuff, it may be more prevalent than you think. Many people addicted to alcohol appear fine so long as they have it in their systems. The really bad reactions occur when they don't.

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Now I feel compelled to turn my tirade to another culprit—a member of the poisonous nightshade family of plants—good old tobacco. Yeah, you heard me right. Tobacco is a poisonous plant. If you don't believe me, let me direct your attention to the Anarchist Cookbook, where it will tell you how it is possible to concentrate the nicotine contained in one pack of cigarettes and administer it in a fashion that will kill your adversary. Dead. From one pack. I know quite a few migrant workers who have had the distinction of harvesting tobacco leaves. They tell stories of being so dizzy they could hardly stand and vomiting routinely from the drug absorbed through their hands. Many consume gallons of milk a day to counteract the effects. Nicotine is also commonly used as an organic bug poison. Doesn't that sound delicious?

We all know it causes cancer. It causes heart attacks. It causes strokes. It raises blood pressure. I don't think anyone enjoys it the first time. One of the worst things about it is that it affects others around the smoker negatively as well. I've heard it said more Colombians die each year smoking tobacco produced in the United States than Americans using cocaine produced in Colombia. Why then do we keep smoking this shit?

Tobacco is highly addictive. I am told the percentage of people able to successfully quit it is similar to those who are able to quit heroin. It shrinks blood vessels, which cause many other of the aforementioned problems related to the circulatory system.

Heavy use causes emphysema and almost certainly lung cancer. It clogs areas in the lungs where oxygen is transferred into the blood and deprives our bodies of this essential life-giving element, without which we will die in a matter of minutes.

Once when I was a horny young adolescent, looking to sneak a peek at images of beautiful young naked girls, I came across a Hustler magazine. Inside I found a picture of a

diseased, cancerous, bloody, black and red and bleeding, puss-oozing lung—extracted from the body of some dead cancer patient. The thing was so disgusting I lost my hard-on. While old Larry Flynt may have done many bad things in his life, he got one right, and I thank him for it. I'll never quite be able to get this picture out of my mind. I am reasonably certain that if the tobacco we smoke affected a visible part of our bodies, like it does a lung, there would be no smokers. Can you imagine walking around with a black, tar-stained, bleeding, and cancerous, puss-oozing face? You ever watch someone pick and pick and pick at a disgusting scab? Think of that the next time you light a cigarette. I see your habit in much the same way.

There are several points I'm trying to make here. First, if you wish to help others with illegal addictions, get rid of as many as you can of your own destructive habits. Second, remember that what they do when they partake of their drug of choice is no worse than what is legally allowed most of us. The laws governing these substances are unfair. *That does not however, justify the illegal use of drugs.*

Two wrongs don't make a right.

For years when the argument arose about marijuana use, I brought up the fact that alcohol and tobacco were also bad, and they were legal. This was my trump card, used to annihilate any of the evidence my adversary in these discussions might present against my beloved marijuana.

One day while riding handcuffed, from the Big Bend National Park toward the jail in Alpine, Texas, in the front seat of a car driven by Eino Hella of the DEA, after having been arrested for smuggling marijuana into this country, I got into such a discussion. It went something like this:

“How much time do you think I'll get?” I asked.

“I don't know. Maybe ten years.”

“Ten years?”

“Yeah”

“I think that is ridiculous! What is so damned bad about marijuana that justifies putting me in jail for ten years?”

Agent Hella began to describe all the bad effects marijuana had on the user and society in general, describing how we all pay indirectly, with loss of productivity, health care costs etc. etc. At some point he ran out of ammo and switched to cocaine.

“Wait a minute! Who said anything about cocaine?”

He went on to tell me how marijuana was considered a stepping-stone to other drugs. Personally, I don't think it is any more than alcohol, other than the fact that you have crossed the line of legality when you pick up a joint.

I brought up that point.

He returned to the discussion on marijuana. “It causes cancer. It stays in your system for days or even weeks. It lowers you IQ. Users become lazy and neglectful. It causes short term memory loss...” On and on he went. Most of what he said is true.

I pulled out my trump card. “The combination of alcohol and tobacco does all of that and more. How can you sit there nursing a hangover, smoking a cigarette—all quite legal, and put me in jail for marijuana?” I said with a smirk.

He yanked the rug right out from under my feet. “If I had my way, they would be illegal too.”

He wasn't nursing a hangover and he wasn't smoking a cigarette.

This was the first satisfactory reply I had heard to my argument. I can still almost feel the sting of his words like a slap to the face, or the crack of a board on the ass, when you know you have done something wrong. I have learned to love the rebuke of a wise man. It can save your life.

When I looked at Eino Hella then and later, I saw a healthy, clear-headed, clean-living man. He believed in his job, and fought for his country in the best way he knew how, in spite of the inconsistencies of our law. He was strong. He was smart, quick on his feet, and quick minded. His eyes sparkled like only those of a sober man can. All of this gave weight to his words. At the time, he was my enemy. He may not know it, but I now

consider him a friend.

Don't get me wrong. I would continue to use marijuana, and it wasn't to be the end of my days as a smuggler either, but what he said and who he was would remain with me, resurfacing time and again. Years later, I concede. You won the argument, Mr. Hella.

And thanks.

Just because alcohol and tobacco are legal, does not justify abusing them. Because others do abuse alcohol and tobacco and get away with it does not justify the abuse of other illegal substances. They all become bad when abused. They all harm you when abused. *This has nothing to do with any law of any land.*

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I have touched on the principle drugs I used regularly; there were others I tried a few times and never quite found a liking for. We are not all exactly alike, nor are our addictions. There may be people out there who can casually consume marijuana on occasion. I'm not one of them. Others do quite well while consuming moderate amounts of alcohol. For others one drink is one too many. There tends to be however, common threads among addicts of any kind.

Some of the drugs I tried scared the hell out of me with one or two attempts to use them, probably because I used excessive amounts out of ignorance. I never was crazy about needles, particularly those placed in veins, and avoided that pitfall. I did witness others who did shoot up and I personally lost a very dear friend at the ripe old age of twenty-five to an intravenous shot of something or other. His death haunts me to this day.

Two drugs that ran me off *quickstyle*, as my kids tend to say, were LSD and crystal methamphetamine. Another that got my attention rather promptly was good old peyote, that spiritually-enlightening stuff of Mexican shaman folklore,

which I have been told is also used by some Native Americans in their spiritual quests. The lesson all three of these substances taught me was that your body can die from what you take into it, and sometimes after taking these substances, it can be a hell of a ride to the other side.

Do you have to hit your big toe with a ball peen hammer to know that it will hurt? Hopefully not. You shouldn't have to almost kill yourself with drugs to know that they can harm you either. You have about as good a chance of meeting God by letting Mike Tyson hit you in the jaw, with a viciously delivered left hook, as you do by consuming strychnine-laced peyote buds.

CHAPTER IV

Shortly after discovering the virtues of cocaine, I possessed a substantial amount of marijuana smuggled from Mexico. Consequently, I had a pocket full of money—more than a pocketful of money—a pile of money. What I didn't have was any cocaine. I put out the word among my friend-buyer-seller types that I was in the market for some of Colombia's finest and was even prepared to pay a premium price if necessary to meet my need. That evening, word came back. A certain individual would be happy to trade me an eight ball for a quarter pound of bud.

This seemed reasonable to me, so I gathered myself up and went to see this fellow. Upon arrival, I discovered that his eight ball was not cocaine after all. The man was a cook, and he had just finished cooking up a batch of absolutely-as-pure-as-it-gets crystal methamphetamine.

I had tried small amounts of this stuff before, and did not like it near so well as cocaine, but, since no coke was available, I decided to go ahead and do the trade.

I took my little white bag of powder home, drew out a big line, and snorted it up. To say it burned understates the fact. Tears gushed from my eyes. A few minutes later, I decided to try another. That is the way we did cocaine. I figured that was the way you did meth as well. The second snort burned as bad as the first. The third, fourth, fifth, and so on got progressively worse.

About midnight, I began to sense that something was wrong. My heart was going too damned fast. I was driving the road to Abilene by this time. I decided to buy some beer to take the edge off of my high, and I decided not to snort any more. It was way too late in the game to be quitting.

What I would soon discover is that meth is much stronger than cocaine, and lasts one hell of a lot longer. That first line I snorted would probably have kept me going for a good twelve hours. As it was, I stayed up for damn near two

days, soaking in a tub and drinking beer in an effort to slow my racing heart. A full twenty-four hours after snorting the last line, I took my pulse--one hundred and thirty five beats a minute--while laying in a bath, being as still as I could.

This was way far from being an enjoyable experience. A couple of days later, while driving the road toward Lubbock, I decided to toss the rest of it out of the window. A friend along for the ride stopped me, assuring me that someone else would very much appreciate having the stuff. Regretfully, I gave it to him. Perhaps no permanent harm came to anyone else out of that little baggie, but I am here to testify that crystal meth can kill you dead, and it damned near did me.

While I never again did a line of this substance, I was locked up with lots of others who did, some of which shot it in their veins, others who drank it in their coffee. It is a favorite of truckers who need to drive for hours without sleeping.

I will try to tell a few second hand stories—sure not to be entirely factual, but also probably not far from the actual events described. One is the story of a young soldier headed for battle in Viet Nam. We'll call the guy Crutch.

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Crutch was a gung ho young man, full of piss and vinegar, newly recruited and trained, and ready to go win the war in Viet Nam; single-handedly, if required, since nobody else seemed to have the balls necessary to get the job done. He arrived in Viet Nam, chomping at the bit, growling like a hungry, caged lion—primed to kill as many bastards as was necessary—all of them if need be. He carried the standard military issue and one little added tool from home—a substantial quantity of meth.

Not wanting to miss any action, Crutch snorted some of his secret stash and stayed up, waiting to be released in a hellish fury of bullets and bombs and grenades. The first night, nothing happened. They sat and waited. The second night was much like the first. So were the third, and the fourth, then the

fifth, and the sixth, and so on, until about three weeks went by, (by his account he went forty days), and Crutch still had not gone to sleep. Then a bad thing happened. Crutch ran out of dope.

His poor body and mind was so tired that he fell into a very deep sleep—almost a coma. Next thing you know, his outfit came under attack. In fact, the enemy overran them. Crutch slept through the whole thing: mortars, grenades, rocket launchers, machine guns, etc. He awoke to find himself behind enemy lines. Somehow the enemy had left him for dead. When they found him, he most probably was very near dead.

It would be almost a year before Crutch rejoined the army he was a part of. In the meantime, he hid out with the help of a Vietnamese family. When he did finally present himself, he got charged with desertion. I think the army finally settled on a lesser charge, and Crutch served a year in the brig for his misdeed.

The second story involves a trucker, more exactly, a cow hauler. This young man figured the way to really make money driving a truck was to never stop. He loaded cattle, hauled them from one place to another, picked up another load and did the same, all the while snorting meth to stay awake. During one of these extended hauling sessions, he reached a point where his body was awake, but his brain was shutting down. Someone finally corralled him, took his dope and forced him to go to sleep in his truck. When he awoke several days later, he had no idea how he got where he was. He had driven from Florida to New Mexico without remembering any of it. It's nothing short of a miracle he did not kill some one.

While in prison another inmate told me how he stayed locked up for a number of consecutive days in a house cooking speed and generously sampling the product of his efforts. He told me he became paranoid to the point that he stood, peaking out of the window for days, until he began to hallucinate, imagining threats that did not exist. At the height of this

deluded state, he began firing weapons into the area surrounding his house. Luckily for him and all, his house was in the country and do one was around to be hit by this hail of indiscriminately fired bullets.

Great stuff. No?

* * * * *

Another potential culprit that bears at least honorable mention in this category is ephedrine and related compounds used in cold and allergy formulas. I recently saw on the news that certain over the counter cold remedies are gaining popularity among youths, who take massive overdoses, with similar results to the effect obtained by illegal amphetamine use.

Ephedrine is used in diet pills and is sold as *legal speed*, primarily to truck drivers needing to stay awake on long drives. Typically these over the counter substances are a cocktail of ephedrine and caffeine; the two elements have a synergistic effect when taken together. I myself have used them, when trying to stay awake on a late night drive, and before powerlifting meets. An overdose of these pills strongly resembles the effect of methamphetamine; it is in fact possible to turn ephedrine into meth by making a slight chemical change.

While some will argue that these substances have beneficial uses, and they do—but not without trade offs—the problem is the level of concentration. All are extreme distillates of substances found in nature, and the level of drug introduced into our bodies is much higher than would be obtainable with the base herb.¹

Also the methods by which they are introduced to the body can and are dangerous and potentially deadly.

¹Ephedrine is contained in ginseng. Cocaine is a concentrate of the coca leaf, commonly chewed by South American Indians, etc.

CHAPTER V

I tried LSD twice. The first looked like a little piece of paper (blotter acid) and was a non-event. Either it was not the real deal, or it was a minute dose. Whichever the case, it did little to me.

The second time proved different. A friend-buyer-seller-user kind of guy and I scored a sheet of previously-unknown-to-me hits of acid referred to as *pyramids*. It looked to be made of the same material from which capsules are made, except it had little raised bumps all over it. The sheet might have been two by four inches or thereabouts and had one thousand of these little bumps on it. It was green and translucent. The guy who sold it to me told me that he had some more, black in color, which contained twice the dose. Thankfully, I did not buy any. I should have paid attention to the fact that he wore rubber gloves while handling the stuff.² He went on to tell me this had come from the Haight-Ashbury district of California and contained pure LSD-25. He told me that most of the acid sold on the streets is something less than this and contains strychnine to aid the high. (Strychnine happens to be rat poison for those of you who are not familiar with it. Don't that sound like some good shit!)

I cut off one of these little pyramids for myself, and another for my friend. The hit was tiny, not much bigger than the head of a pin. I was told to put it under my tongue and let it dissolve.

Yeah, right, I thought to myself. Like this little tiny thing is going to do something to me.

We got into the car and began to drive. At the time, we were in Fort Worth. A few minutes later, I began to feel the effect of the drug coming on. I began to notice "tracers" coming off of the signs we passed. I felt like I was still doing fine behind the wheel, when I happened to look down at the speedometer. I

²I would later learn that he had almost overdosed on the stuff just by handling it with bare hands.

was doing thirty-five, down the freeway.

I may have been an idiot, but not a total idiot. I hit the next exit, pulled into the parking lot of a motel, and drove no further. Jeff and I argued over who had to go in to rent the room. Neither of us felt like it was something we could successfully pull off. Being a veteran of LSD usage, Jeff finally decided to do so. I got elected to walk to a nearby convenience store to buy the beer he told me would help to mellow the now raging effect of the drug. I bought a case. We locked ourselves into the room. Everything appeared funny to me and I laughed over the stupidest things.

I did not like the way the LSD made me feel. I couldn't control my emotions.

I normally didn't drink much; one or two beers was my limit. I drank about six and didn't feel a thing. That little tiny hit of acid totally overrode the alcohol.

"What can I do to stop this?" I asked Jeff.

"Eat something. That will bring you down."

Once again we argued over who would go out to face the public. This time Jeff insisted. We settled at a compromise. We would both go, on foot, to a nearby restaurant. We walked into the place, walked up to deliver our order, and I broke out laughing, or more correctly tried like hell to stifle laughter. The girl taking our order was hilarious, or so I thought. I got my food and ate.

We went back to the motel. The uncomfortable high persisted. I stayed up the whole night trying to come down—unsuccessfully. My face was flushed, and I was sweating. I couldn't wipe the grin off of my face to save my life. We drank the rest of the beer. Every time I thought I was through the worst of it, another wave would hit, and I would find myself right back in the same state of mind—a state of mind I disliked acutely. My cheeks ached for two days afterwards from smiling so damned much.

That was the last time I tried LSD.

I later heard stories about this drug that scared me

further. Like one of a guy I'll call Leroy, who, while in prison, had some acid, sent in on the periods of a letter. Leroy had an acquaintance, a fellow inmate he didn't much care for, who had a habit of bumming.

When this bum found out that Leroy had acid, he begged for a dose.

"Hell no! Where's the money?" Leroy asked.

"Come on man! Let me have some!"

"Get out of here!"

"Come on man!"

This bum persisted too long with his begging.

Thinking, *you want some acid, I'll give you some acid*, Leroy slipped about a dozen hits into whatever the bum happened to be drinking at the time. It sent the guy on a trip he never came back from. It didn't kill him. It put him on a high he can't get off of. Looney land. Wizard of OZ territory. Alice in Wonderland. Were it not true, it might be funny. The guy is an invalid

I saw a survivor of LSD tests on TV, administered to soldiers by the government of the good old United States of America way back when, who is in similar shape—a psychological, emotional wreck—and totally unable to function. The shit ruined him for life. It was not a surprise to me that the man was black. You know, *give it to the nigger—lets see what it does to him!*

From what I have been told, I gather LSD can be taken in rather large doses without reaching toxic levels. While your body may not die at such levels of intoxication (also known as poisoning), your mind may not survive intact.

There is an interesting book describing the effect of this drug called "St. Anthony's Fire". This is the true story of a town inadvertently and unknowingly dosed with large doses of LSD contained in ergot, a naturally occurring source of the drug. Ergot is a fungus that under optimal conditions can grow on unharvested heads of grain. In this case, the grain was wheat, which was ground and mixed with good flour, baked into

loaves, and distributed to the citizens of a small town in France.

So permeated was this bread with the drug, that the whole town went a month without sleeping. No one actually died from the poison itself (I don't think), however, there were many casualties. Some jumped from buildings thinking they could fly; others died while fleeing flames they imagined were burning their bodies. A doctor observed and recorded what he saw and felt, having not a clue as to why it was happening. This occurred in the late 1700's. It would be years later before someone discovered what had afflicted the town. I'll virtually guarantee you one thing. You wouldn't get any of the people that went through that to voluntarily do it again.

Why should we?

CHAPTER VI

There was a time in my life, while living in the state of Oregon, when I was a hippie. Not like most would think of though. I was a cowboy and a hippie all at the same time. I worked by day herding cattle, breaking horses, milking cows, logging, cutting hay, and various other farm related chores on a friend's farm. To pay for all of this freedom, we secretly grew high quality marijuana.

Among our group, we were on a health kick of sorts. We would not allow any preservatives to sneak into our food, and far be it from us to allow a grain of white sugar to pollute our bodies. Everything had to be natural. When we ate, we ate natural—no white flour for us by damn! We killed our own meat, grew our own vegetables, picked our own fruit, and preserved all of this in various fashions in preparation for “the end days” soon to come.

We even went so far as to live in Tee Pees. Now folks, this is Eastern Oregon we're talking about. It snows there. There were times when this Texas boy, unaccustomed to freezing his ass off, had a fire going in that tee pee that had us all pinned to the sides of the damned thing—rotating sides to keep from catching fire. It is a wonder they had any trees left after I got through trying to stay warm.

We were on a spiritual kick at the time and had discovered that in order to reach these spiritual planes of discovery, we had to smoke plenty of marijuana. This fit right into my lifestyle at the time. Mind you, not any marijuana would do. The stuff we grew sold for up to three thousand dollars a pound (two thousand in wholesale quantities) and was five to ten times stronger than the average of the day.

Every now and again, just to mix things up we would smoke some very potent Colombian gold. Besides growing marijuana, the owner of the place happened to be a major international marijuana broker on the side. This afforded us the chance to add a little Thai-stick or a chunk of Lebanese Red or

Blond hashish into the occasion if we desired. For a change of pace we might smoke some Kona gold, Jamaican Lamb's Bread, or a competitor's Sonoma coma, indica, or any other number of potent possibilities produced in the Northwest. To say we had a *supply* on hand does injustice to the word.

In spite of this ungodly array of cannabis, occasionally we felt an extra urgent need to seek still higher levels of spiritual consciousness. On these occasions, we would go to the Indian sweat lodge. Now, I may not know how Indians find God in such a place, but I know how we tried.

The sweat lodge was made from interconnected boughs of branches lashed together to form a small hut shaped like an igloo. In the middle of this hut a hole was dug into the ground. Lava rocks would be heated outside the hut in a large fire. The hut was covered with multiple layers of tarps. When the rocks got red hot, and I mean glowing red hot as in almost melting, they were placed in the hole in the ground. The tarps would be closed, immersing us in darkness and heat. When I say heat, I mean *damn hot*. It took great control to stay in the hut; most of us would soon be as close to the ground as possible trying to get a breath of cool air with a little oxygen left in it, but afraid to leave before God appeared. We also did not want to be the first to wimp out.

A peace pipe was usually passed around during these prayer sessions to make sure we had enough THC in our bodies to be spiritually receptive. And when all else failed, we ate peyote. Peyote has been known to help lots of people find God, or so we had been told.

Unlike most other drugs I had tried, peyote makes the user sick as hell soon after ingestion, often causing nausea and feelings of discomfort. After this period, comes the part considered enjoyable. Peyote is in the family of cacti, and contains a drug called mescaline. It has been used for years, principally by Indians. I am told they did not use it routinely, but only on special occasions, perhaps while seeking spiritual direction in their lives. These same guys were also known to let

poisonous snakes bite their bodies.

The dried *buttons* contain pockets of hair-like material similar to those found in the heads of many weeds and flowers. These pockets contain strychnine. Users of the drug dig out these hairs, grind the buds into flour, mix the flour with water to form a dough of sorts, and swallow the bitter bastards. Alternately, a tea can be made, but I don't think you'll find anyone—even the bravest proponents of the stuff—that will claim it tastes good.

The first couple of times I tried peyote, my experience was okay, but I didn't receive any great spiritual revelation. I had consumed one or two buttons. A friend and I decided that maybe the problem was we hadn't taken enough. I suffered through consuming about ten; he ate twelve. This proved no easy task. Within an hour, my friend was puking. I was also nauseated, but couldn't throw up. I reached the point where I knew I needed to and tried to stick my finger down my throat. It didn't work. The things we do for fun.

I ended up back in the tub, lying there totally numb, like my body was a large piece of clay. I had an out of body experience, seeing myself from above the tub. I think I may have been pretty close to dead.

Part of the popularity of peyote was created by the Mexican tradition of Shamanism, discussed in the books of Carlos Castaneda. There is wisdom to be found in some of these teachings, or so I believe anyway. I haven't read all of them, and am no expert on the subject, but do remember finding one humorous bit of information. While Castaneda's principal focus on Shamanism was the peyote, in the beginning anyway, his teacher didn't think much of the stuff. After years of stuffing this shit down Castaneda's throat, his mentor told him the peyote was nothing but a tool to snare a pupil, and unnecessary for spiritual enlightenment. I concur.

* * * * *

Other drugs I tried over the years included the various pharmaceuticals, like speed in pill form, downers (Qualudes Seconal, Tuinal, Valium, etc.), hallucinogenic mushrooms and probably a few more that don't come to mind right away. Some of these substances have valid medical uses when used judiciously; all can be dangerous and even lethal when used improperly.

CHAPTER VII

One of the things the government has done to hurt its case over the years where drugs are concerned is to disseminate false, misleading information about them. Remember reefer madness?

I remember the first time I tried marijuana. I expected to be overwhelmed by this powerful wave of intoxication. When it didn't happen, my first thought was, *those lying bastards!* Alcohol tended to hit me much harder, or so it seemed. I wasn't sure I felt anything, and had to smoke a second joint before recognizing any effect, (the weed was most probably of poor quality). Since part of what the government had said obviously was a lie, it was easy for me to deduce that *all* they said regarding the subject was a lie. The truth would have served them, and me, much better.

While marijuana will not cause someone to go out and rape someone--forgetting what he has done, like possibly alcohol is capable of doing in rare instances--it does have negative effects proven to me by experience. Among them: short term memory loss, lethargy, loss of motivation, impaired lung function, and addiction. It most probably causes cancer and heart attacks.

It also has some medicinal uses. I found it to be the best cure for nausea on the planet.³ Some allege it is useful for glaucoma. I think it may have a use for people suffering from severe depression. Terminally ill patients may suffer less under its influence.

Healthy, sane people should not use it recreationally, or at least that is my opinion. I will concede each has his or her right to his or her mind after being armed with the facts.

Don't however, bullshit people with a bunch of lies.

Even now, I see a new wave of anti-drug propaganda on TV, trying to guilt people into quitting by saying that the

³You doctors out there need to look into this—in fact I challenge you to do so.

money they spend on the stuff goes towards promoting terrorism. So does money spent on diamonds. Should every woman in the country rip off her wedding ring in disgust? Will they when told that? I don't think so. While a small portion of drug money may go to such causes, it is an almost insignificant amount. If it did, drug dealers would have armies rivaling our own.⁴ The largest sponsors of terrorism are governments and extreme religious groups; I am sad to say, our own are included. Should we also refrain from paying income tax? Or how about contributing to religious organizations? I'll guarandamnteyou you are sponsoring terrorism when you pay your taxes. Our terrorists may further your position in the world, but they are terrorists nonetheless.

Another recent commercial against marijuana depicted a young girl sitting on a couch smoking joints, until she eventually succumbed to the advances of a young boy. The fact is, many more girls are taken advantage of under the influence of alcohol than all other drugs, legal and illegal, combined. Do your homework folks.

While these commercials may make non-users feel righteous in their efforts to stop others from doing drugs; they will have absolutely no effect whatsoever in helping people struggling with addiction; in fact, I believe they do a disservice to the cause.

Present people with the facts—nothing more—nothing less. If and when you express an opinion, let it be known as an opinion.

⁴The illegal drug business is the world's second largest business behind the manufacture of weapons.

CHAPTER VIII

I am writing this as a free-for-all monologue without rigid structure, allowing my mind to roam as it may. Hopefully this roaming will not present too much of an impediment for you the reader. The subject I am talking about is one that has greatly affected my life, and one I feel passionately about. I do not pretend to have all the answers, in fact, I am sure that I am off base in some ways. I also know, that by the grace of God, or so I choose to believe, I have successfully overcome a variety of harmful addictions.

There is a trend in our country now to think all mental disorders are caused by chemical imbalances of the brain. While some may be, I feel the trend of doctors today is to find a pill for everything. The use of Ritalin on our children comes to mind. I know very little about the subject, never having tried the stuff. What I read scares the shit of me. Ritalin is a stimulant—speed in other words—used to treat what many people in the know believe is a non-existent condition known as attention deficit disorder.

I say non-existent. There are children suffering from a syndrome—the symptoms including hyperactivity, the inability to concentrate, and a perceived learning disability. The reason I say non-existent is that there is no proof that the cause of this syndrome has anything to do with chemical imbalances of the brain. Treatment of the condition is based on that unproven assumption. There is a mountain of evidence that suggests that the problem may be one of environment, more than anything else. I discovered a good book on the subject and I will refer you to it rather than open my trap on a subject of which I am no expert. The book is called *The Wildest Colts Make the Best Horses*, written by John Breeding.

The scary thing about this is this: by best estimates, millions of our kids are now on the stuff. That ought to raise the hair on the back of your neck. Something is wrong here.

Another drug d' jour is XTC. In my day, there was a pill

available known as ecstasy, created to circumvent drug laws banning the use of a substance known as MDA. I never tried it. I was told by reliable sources that it is similar to cocaine in its affect. It was referred to as the love drug. The ecstasy of my time was MDMA, a slight chemical variation of MDA that did not meet the description of the law making MDA illegal, and was widely distributed legally until the law caught up and made it illegal as well.

Now I am told, there is another drug, commonly referred to by youth as X. It often contains any number of drugs (heroin, etc.) in a powerful cocktail in addition to MDA. It is produced primarily in Europe and popular in “rave” circles. I have heard really bad things about this drug, but I am not well informed, so I will refrain from pretending to know a lot about it. I mention it, because a lot of people out there are using it.

One of my children used it extensively and told me some real horror stories. He also told me he really liked the stuff. For me, the second fact was the scarier of the two.

CHAPTER IX

Now let me direct your attention to a drug I do know something about—actually not one drug, but a family of drugs, wildly popular among athletes. These drugs are performance-enhancing substances known as anabolic steroids.

Anabolic steroids are synthetic and naturally occurring hormones—most variations of testosterone—a male hormone produced in the testicles of mammals, including man. Testosterone contributes to the maleness of a man: larger muscles, bones, etc. It also contributes to sex drive and masculine characteristics like hair on the face and body, and an aggressive attitude. Athletes discovered that by taking additional amounts of testosterone and its cousins, they'd get bigger, faster, and stronger.

They work by enabling the body to recuperate faster, which allows the athlete to train harder and make greater gains in a given amount of time. Even without training, they cause some muscle growth, a higher rate of metabolism, which burns fat from the body, and additional production of red blood cells. People who take them get bigger muscles, a leaner body with minimal subcutaneous fat, more stamina, and an aggressive attitude useful in competitive environments. Sounds great, doesn't it. Like I said before, if there weren't some benefits from drug use, no one would use them. Anabolic steroids do have desirable effects and some legitimate uses.

Unfortunately, there is plenty of room for abuse. People take unbelievably large doses of these substances—insane doses. When they do, the drug turns them into freaks of nature. Open any bodybuilding book at your local bookstore or newsstand and see what it can do for you. I am here to tell you that not one of the bodybuilders currently competitive in the unrestricted bodybuilding federations or agencies is not on the juice. Not one. It is impossible to compete in these organizations without it. Impossible.

Taken in these large doses, negative effects emerge.

Because they cause such rapid cell growth, conventional wisdom on the subject suggests that they may trigger the growth of unwanted tissue—cancer cells for one. The human body senses hormonal imbalances and fights to normalize itself. A male taking steroids will often develop enlarged breast tissue, commonly referred to as *bitch tits*. This is caused by a release of estrogen, a predominately female hormone to fight the oversupply of testosterone detected by the body. This is an oversimplification of the matter, but I am not going to waste your time or mine getting technical on the subject. Other common negative side effects on men include shrinking of the testicles, excessive sexual drive, (hyper-sexuality), which eventually is replaced with an inability to perform over long periods of abuse, (impotence), hair loss, cessation of sperm production, (sterility), pimples, blood flushed skin, (white people on the stuff often appear red), night sweats, insomnia, nervousness, irritability, and sometimes uncontrollable anger, referred to as *steroid rage*.

The liver has the job of dealing with excess amounts of these chemicals, and can be damaged by their use.

The effect of steroids on women is often more profound, due to the fact that their bodies do not naturally contain as much testosterone as does a man's. Women's voices often change, becoming low like a man's. Their clitoris enlarges. They experience abnormal elevated sex drives, bordering on nymphomania. Their faces become masculine and they may develop face and body hair like that of a man. Some of these changes reportedly are irreversible. They also may get strong as hell, far exceeding women athletes not using the juice. In a society driven by the desire to win, using them is a huge temptation.

The jury is still out on long-range effects of anabolic steroids. They are currently being used in greater quantity than ever before, not only in the world of bodybuilding, but nearly all competitive sports. When testing procedures are implemented, chemists find ways to circumvent the tests.

Because these chemicals closely resemble naturally occurring hormones—some are in fact natural hormones—testing for them is difficult at best.

The addictive nature of these substances is not so much for a feeling they generate; the addiction is to the results of their use. When an athlete stops taking steroids, typically his or her performance declines. This is hard to accept. This applies particularly to men, whose natural production of testosterone has ceased almost entirely if they have taken steroids for an extended time. They train and train, and get weaker and weaker, at least until the body begins to normalize, which can take considerable time. While women may return to a more natural state when quitting, men may fall below natural performance levels.

Most proponents of steroid use advocate using them in cycles, allowing the body to rest in between. The truth is, this is very rarely done. Rather than quit, users will switch varieties when their bodies no longer seem to respond to the drugs. At some point, after years and years of use, these drugs have less and less effect, of the positive variety at least. Users will typically use more and more, seeing less and less for their efforts, and risking more and more of the negative effects of the drug.

There is no fountain of youth. If we live long enough, our bodies get old and begin to fail. Nothing short of an early death will stop this from happening. I think that judicious use of hormones may have some beneficial effects as we age, but not without risk. Not so long ago, many doctors had menopausal women on estrogen therapy. Now, it appears that there are questions as to whether this was a good idea. Some doctors prescribe small doses of testosterone to older men, along with human growth hormone. Early indicators show this may have beneficial affects. I'm sure it does. I also fear harmful side effects. The jury is still out. Additional testing is needed.

I currently compete in powerlifting competitions. I get my ass kicked, primarily by people using steroids. My livelihood

does not depend on winning. I tried them on a very limited basis (there are legal, over-the-counter preparations which are in fact steroids) and discovered my genetic limitations are such that I could not win even if I did use them. I train racehorses for a living. In this sport, use of steroids is allowed, although only a licensed veterinarian can administer them to a horse. My horses run on them, because if they didn't, they could not win. (A vet once told me; *in racing the only horse that gets hurt by steroids is the one that doesn't get them.*) In horse racing, only winners get paid (actually the first five places), and a horse's career on the track usually lasts two to three years. If I don't get paid, I go broke.

Unfortunately, in professional athletics, the same can be said. Only winners get paid, but humans use these drugs for much longer periods of time and at much higher doses. So long as an elite athlete does not get caught, his or her performance and success will benefit from the use of anabolic steroids. He or she will become famous, rich, and admired by all.

The question remains—at what cost?

CHAPTER X

You may ask why I would want to write about drugs and addiction. I write on this subject because it has had a profound impact on my life. I also see others struggling with similar battles. When I decided to quit drinking and doping, I was in jail surrounded by dopers and dealers. There was no AA or NA, just a lot of people doing dope. I decided to quit. This was not the first time I decided to quit, but it would be the first time I succeeded for any significant amount of time. (The last time I smoked a joint or drank alcohol was in 1986.) Only upon being released from prison, five years later, was I exposed to AA and NA meetings. I had come to many of the same conclusions as they teach, with a few exceptions—at least one of which is a major point in my mind.

I refused to stand up and say, *I am an addict*. I see this as an admission of defeat. There is a difference in saying, *I am addicted*, and, *I am an addict*. I believe that people can change. Addiction is a disease that can be overcome. There comes a point when a person has quit addictive behavior long enough that that person is no longer addicted, and is no longer an addict. Admitting one's faults is a necessary step in overcoming them. The time comes however, when one must move on with his or her life, and pronounce victory where applicable. I noticed a trend in these organizations for people to get hung on first base, so to speak.

I discovered a few tools to deal with my own addictions. I am still a work in progress and don't believe I have all the answers, but I have experienced some success and know others who have done the same. I also have friends that have failed time and again, flunking out of every conceivable form of drug abuse treatment program.

In nearly all cases, drug abuse is originally a symptom of other underlying problems in a person's life. Recognizing and addressing these problems is a necessary part of making an attempt at quitting stick.

There is a tendency for people to portray drug abuse as the primary reason for their problems in this life; drug use caused it all. People in the business of helping others quit further this notion.

I quit drinking and doping and all my problems disappeared! Praise the Lord! Halleluiah! Jesus saved me! He can do the same for you!

People pray. They quit using drugs. The physical cravings soon disappear. But, problems remain. They still don't like themselves. They have all this time on their hands; time once spent getting high. They are bored. They are lonely. All their friends shared their addiction. Now they must look for new friends—no easy task. Who needs friends? No matter what people may say, we all need friends. Man was not meant to be alone on this planet. Left alone—sad, bored, and depressed—it is all too easy for an ex-addict to fall, and once the first step is taken, the fall is often precipitous, as in straight down.

Ex-addicts will return to their old circles, hoping to find acceptance without using the drugs. That ain't happening. People using dope do not, as a rule, feel comfortable around others who don't. While there may be some cases of an ex-addict helping his friends to quit using, the predominant outcome will be the other way around. Misery loves company.

Successfully quitting drugs involves much more than breaking physical addictions. Why did we use them in the first place—before we were addicted? The answer to that question will vary greatly from one person to another. It must be addressed in order to overcome and to keep from relapsing. Perhaps it was for acceptance. Others you knew and admired used the stuff and you felt that by doing so yourself you might be more like them, or at least accepted by them. Perhaps you suffered from depression, brought on by feelings of inadequacy, or incompetence. Maybe you hated your parents and wanted to rebel. It will take deep introspection to discover the answers to these questions. I had a little help finding time for such thought, courtesy of the Bureau of Prisons and a few guards at

various federal penal institutions in our country. The hole at La Tuna comes to mind.

CHAPTER XI

I arrived at the federal correctional facility at La Tuna, Texas after seven months of incarceration in county jails in New Mexico. These seven months had allowed me time to quit using marijuana, but no one running these institutions bears any fault for this.

At the initial jail I occupied after my arrest, in Los Lunas, N.M., there was so much marijuana available that *it was less expensive inside the jail than outside the jail*. Nearly everyone in the place was there on drug charges and had the very best connections available for dope. Security must have been lax; somehow or other quantities arrived on a regular basis; and rare was the time when a joint was not going around. The inmates didn't even bother hiding the joints from the guards as they made their rounds, and the guards looked the other way.

I was housed in a cellblock designed for eight inmates. It contained anywhere from 14 to 18 on any given day. Of that number, one other fellow and I were the only ones that did not smoke dope. I say I didn't. I arrived addicted. The other inmates so repulsed me, (this was an unusually depraved lot), that I did not want to associate with them. Once or twice, before making the decision to quit, I did take a hit off of a joint, just to prove to them that I was not a snitch installed in the cell looking for information. Once I finally did decide to quit, I just quit. There was no magic. One day I smoked; the next day I did not. If anyone asked, I informed him of my decision. That was okay with them. I had no money, so anything I smoked would be bummed anyway. This left more for them.

I didn't want to owe these guys.

To say I didn't suffer withdrawal symptoms would be to lie. I tried to sleep as much as possible. When not sleeping I did pushups, sit-ups and other assorted exercises. I read whatever I could get my hands on. I took each minute, one at a time. Minutes turned into hours, hours into days, days into weeks, weeks, months. After four months in this hellhole, I pleaded

guilty and was sentenced to additional time, and then transferred to a private jail near Santa Fe. I had gone four months without a joint.

This facility was much nicer, and while dope was available, not near to the degree as the jail at Los Lunas. We had a workout room. I took advantage of the entire time allotted us each day in this room to exercise on a weight machine. My body got stronger, and I began to feel better. I read the Bible from cover to cover, along with numerous other books of varying genre. After three months, I was sentenced, and sent in a van to La Tuna.

I will never forget my arrival at La Tuna. This presented the first opportunity for the Bureau of Prisons to get their hands back on me since my escape from one of their facilities some eighteen months before. They had a surprise waiting. While most of the inmates arriving there were released into the population, I went straight to the hole.

It was dark outside the prison by the time we cleared R and D (receiving and discharge). I was led into a poorly lit hallway, with a sheet, a vinyl covered mattress of sorts, and a towel. Guards led each of us to a door, opened it and invited us to go in. When my time came, I obediently walked through the door into pitch black. The solid metal door slammed shut behind me with authority. I could not see my hand in front of my face.

I could hear cursing and screams coming from some of the other inmates in similar predicaments—demanding light. I think the guards got a kick out of this. I was determined not to add to their enjoyment, so I didn't make a sound. I felt around the room with trepidation, hoping there would be no filth or dangerous material in the place. I discovered that I could place a hand on either wall; I estimated my new home to be five feet by nine feet. The walls were solid concrete, with a layer of paint. I was thirsty. I found a one-piece combination toilet and sink, but in the darkness could not figure out how to operate the thing. A double bunk, made from solid steel was welded or

bolted to the wall. I managed to get my bedroll spread out on the thing, laid down and went to sleep.

My wife accuses me of being able to go to sleep anywhere. This is something I learned to do while a fugitive, running from Mexican soldiers in the Chihuahuan desert, and in numerous county jails and prisons around our great country. It can be a useful and necessary tool of survival.

The following day, I discovered a window high up on one wall, too high to see out of unless I stood on the top bunk of my cell. The view was poor, consisting of a small courtyard divided into small chain link wire enclosures approximating dog runs. Directly across from my window, perhaps forty feet away, was a white concrete wall. This was to be the only proof I had that the outside world still existed during my stay there, aside from the ever-changing guards rotating in and out of the place.

My door contained a bean-hole, through which food was delivered. The food was adequate. The door also had a peephole through which I could see the cell directly across from mine, and another set of eyes staring out of his peephole, when a guard mercifully left it open. Some of the other inmates screamed, cried, cussed, hollered, and kicked their doors—all to no avail. The guards came around at set times, and at set times only, those being when they were counting us, or feeding us. The rest of the time they were absent. I suspect they were around, but took great delight in listening to the misery of the caged humans in their care. I determined that I would not add to that delight.

I sat. Then, I lay. Then I did push-ups. Then I sat again. One hour gone—twenty-three to go. In the hole, hours seem like days, and days—weeks. I tried to entertain myself. Jacking off to stored memories of women I had known helped, but I soon discovered this activity has its limits, and in my case, uses up very little time. At some point, I decided to search my mind for answers to a number of questions like: How in hell did I end up here? Why did I end up here? What was it in me that caused me to be a criminal—a dope head—an adulterer—a liar—a self-

centered bastard—inconsiderate to the needs of others?

I went over my life in my mind, reliving things I had experienced from childhood on, looking for answers to some of these questions. I did not find answers to all my questions, but I did find a few. For me and I suspect others, this was a necessary step toward recovery.

Now I don't want to suggest doing what I did to find time for such reflection; I would never volunteer to go back to that hell on earth again, nor would I wish it upon you (there might be a few of you out there—me being human—that I would wish this upon). There is bound to be an easier way to find time for thought and prayerful reflection than to get thrown into the hole at La Tuna.

Here are a few of the things I identified in myself; character defects if you wish, which made me susceptible to addiction.

* * * * *

I am the oldest brother of five children born to my parents. I was blessed, or cursed, whichever way you choose to see it, with my father's name. My parents always had high expectations of me, and at an early age, I too expected a lot of myself. I did not want to be good at things I tried. I wanted to be best—the best football player—the best baseball player—the fastest kid in my class—the strongest kid in my class—the toughest—the smartest—the friendliest—the most reliable—the most loyal, etc. I tried to be all these things and fell short.

I was intelligent, but not the smartest. I was fast—for a time, the fastest in my class—but time went by and the day came where try as a might—my legs wouldn't go as fast as some of the others. I had planned to outrun Bob Hayes. I pissed the bed routinely, and felt great guilt for doing so. I tried like hell to stop and couldn't. Life is full of disappointments, not only for me, but for all of us.

There were parts of me I was ashamed of, and I hid them

from the world the best way I knew how—by lying and concealing things—not terribly bad things—just facts like, *maybe I wasn't the fastest kid in school any more, or I peed the bed again last night*. These hidden parts of myself, I learned to hate. In essence, I suppose I learned to hate myself. Lying and concealing became other parts of who I was that merited hating, then self-loathing itself merited disgust, and things kept growing, like some ugly cancer, hidden from view.

I spent most of my youth unable to live up to the expectations of my family or myself. In retrospect, I wasn't a bad kid at all.

I competed in athletic competitions and did well, but was beaten on occasion. I can remember crying after losing a baseball game—miserably—and then hating myself for crying also. I was probably the second or third best third baseman in our Little League. I didn't make the all-star team. I found no consolation in being second or third. I wasn't the best. Eventually, the fear of losing and the disappointments surrounding losing left me afraid to compete. I quit participating in the sports I loved to play.

Puberty was tough on me; it must be on just about everybody. Hormones assaulted me; new expectations came at frightening speed; each new day brought a new challenge it seemed. I began to hate the world and the expectations it had for me.

In most of our lives, there are critical times in our lives where a decision we make will affect the rest of our lives—a *crossroads*. I reached one of these, I believe, around the time I was set to go to college.

At the time, I was rodeoing, and having some success at it. I wanted to go to Texas A&M, major in animal science, and rodeo on the side. My dad wanted me to join the Corps of Cadets. I didn't want to be in the corps. He insisted. I gave in, but it wasn't really what I wanted to do.

If you decide to join the Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M, you better want to be there, otherwise you are not going to

make it. I hated it. The first few days were worse than I would later experience in prison, and I volunteered for this shit. Upperclassmen harassed us constantly. No matter what we did, it was wrong. At some point during this part of my life, I unconsciously decided that since I couldn't be the best at doing good things, or socially acceptable things; perhaps I could be the best at doing bad, or socially unacceptable things. I rebelled.

In my mind, the world was all fucked up. I didn't want to be a part of it, at least the part that ran things. I declared war on it. I whipped a couple of upperclassmen. I saved tobacco juice (from chewing tobacco), letting mold grow on it to bathe one of the bastards in his sleep. I stayed in trouble, and began to take pride in doing so. When we were told that under no circumstances were we going to be allowed to revive the tradition of kidnapping our commanding officer, once celebrated at A&M, I did it anyway, to spite the bastards. I took great joy in pulling this off, while an entire company of upperclassmen tried unsuccessfully to stop me. I sacked the guy up in a cotton sack, loaded him into the back of my pickup, and drove him four hours away through freezing rain and dumped his ass on the beach at Freeport, Texas (poor guy), dressed in shorts and combat boots. Of course, this meant more punishment. Eventually my struggles with the corps grew to the point that there was no time left for class, so I quit going. I soon learned that you flunk out when you do this.

This came as a huge surprise to my parents, because my midterm grades reflected a 3.25 GPA. My final report card was all F's, the first F's in my life—these from a student with a SAT score in the vicinity of 1400. Being a dropout, I found hard to swallow.

To make this as brief as possible, I met a girl with *troubles*, a girl fresh out of a mental institution for having tried to kill herself, and already the mother of one child, had sex with her, which for me was a first, and got married, contrary to the wishes of my parents. Along the way, I also smoked my first

joint.

Yes sir, here again was another of those *crossroads*.

In life, these *crossroads* present opportunities to go several directions, but beware—because once having made a choice, you may not be able to turn back. My first marriage was a living hell for the biggest part. We fought before we got married, on our so-called honeymoon (disaster, in our case), and damned near every day thereafter. I won't say she is or was a bad person. I will say we had a bad marriage. My wife got pregnant almost immediately and I found myself trapped in a life I did not like.

Marijuana became the principal tool I used to hide from reality.

CHAPTER XIV

I typed the last few words, figuring I had reached the end of this monologue. After all, once God is mentioned, all questions are answered, are they not? I determined at the outset of this writing it would not have a predetermined format or required length. This morning, about four or five am, new thoughts flooded my brain.

I have addressed addiction on a personal level. What if the truth reveals addiction of individuals is a symptom of a greater disease in our society, a big cancerous sort of thing that spreads from one person to the next? I have heard estimates of drug consumption, revealing that our country, The United States of America, consumes a disproportionate amount of the drugs produced in the world, (far more than average). If this is true, are we victims of our own success?

Having been to several foreign countries in our own hemisphere, it is obvious to me that we enjoy a higher standard of living than most occupying this planet. When the basic elements on the hierarchy of needs table are taken care of, is it human nature to want more and more? Is the human animal so flawed that it will eat itself to death, or drug itself to death given the opportunity? If so, why? Are these other peoples less inclined to use drugs because they are locked in a struggle to provide more basic elements of existence, like food, and shelter, and have no time to waste getting high?

As in my search for God, my search for answers concerning addiction often creates more questions than answers.

I found drugs useful in dealing with personal disillusionment. Is this an epidemic condition, shared by many in our country? If so, why?

I know I was and still am frustrated. I was taught that those who live clean lives, and work hard, always trying to be honest in dealings with others, would succeed in life. Reality seems to indicate something quite different. Most rich people

are scoundrels. In order for someone to win, others have to lose.

While our forefathers spent quite a bit of time and energy talking about God, they based our economic system on competition. We compete against each other, and as a country, we compete against other countries. Success is measured in dollars and cents. While our words about God and His virtues say one thing, our actions say another.

Honesty does not bring money. Shrewdness does. Thievery can. Ever hear the slogan made famous by Bob Dylan, “Steal a little—they throw you in jail, steal a lot—and they make you king.” Or how about this one, “You can steal much more with paper and a pen than you can with a gun.”

I can't tell you how many times I have seen someone, paraded in front of a camera after a conquest in whatever endeavor they participated in, stand and say, “Isn't it great that we live in a country where no matter who you are, if you work hard enough, you can be successful.”

Did you ever notice that everyone making such a statement is always the winner or his or her game? I wonder if you asked all the people they beat if they concur with that opinion. Do these winners really think they worked harder than every one else to get where they are? While they may think that, I seriously doubt it in most cases. The higher the achievement in this world, the more losers of the game are required. For instance, to be the Heavyweight champion of the world, you have to have successfully kicked the ass of all comers, or more correctly, kicked the ass of those who have kicked the ass of those who have kicked the ass of everybody in the whole world willing to put on gloves and step into the ring. Did he work harder than everybody else, and not lie, cheat, politic, or steal to get where he is? When he stands and says, “I am living proof that anyone can succeed if they try hard enough,” doesn't he lie? Only one can be the Heavyweight champion of the world. The rest must all lose, no matter how hard they work.

The business world makes boxing look good. At least the boxer is up front about what he wants to do to his opponent,

which is to knock him to the ground with repeated blows to the head until he can't get back up. In the world of business, we smile, shake hands, wave, flatter, and praise: all the while looking for advantage. The truly successful in our society do not work harder than the rest; they learn how to make money off of someone else working hard. Deception pays handsomely.

A young kid taught about the American way, may work hard, study hard, be honest in all his dealings, and find himself a slave to a company of thieves like Enron, and watch every thing he has worked all his life for, stolen. While those from Enron may be punished someday, they are one of many; most will laugh all the way to the bank time after time, with other people's money in tow, and they will get away with it.

I have heard it said that the white man came to this continent: raped, robbed, pillaged and stole; and then passed laws saying, no more raping, robbing, pillaging, or stealing. Laws seem designed to protect those who have all ready gotten advantage over others.

Competition seems contrary to teachings of Christianity to me. Patriotism, a thin veil for loyalty to one's country in competition with others, seems contrary to teachings of Christianity. Islam and the rest are no different. We all seem disposed to use religion to justify and advance our position in this world.

Is it any wonder that people become disillusioned?

You may ask, "How does any of this relate to addiction?"

Addiction may be, as I previously suggested, a symptom of greater ills in our world, a world full of contradictions and disappointments.

The answers about how to fix all of this are way beyond me.

There is a prayer often recited in AA or NA meetings, referred to as the serenity prayer. It goes something like this: *Lord, grant me the strength to change the things I can, the courage to accept the things I can't, and the wisdom to know the difference between the two.* That may not be exactly right, but

it's close anyway. This seems to be a good way of looking at life. I personally have a hard time accepting the things I can't change though, and spend a good bit of my time banging my head against immovable objects. Whether I learn to like it or not, I will have to accept the fact that there are things in this world that are the way they are, and I am powerless to do anything about them.

Today, I can and will control what I take into my body, in spite of all the disappointments out there.

You can too.

By the way—the best high on earth may be the one you were born with—being sober and healthy.

A Cowboy's Observations on the Law

Now it is time to bang my head against the wall.

In order for a book to be a book, there are length requirements. By itself, my essay on addiction does not qualify, so I will attempt to address another aspect of the world of drugs without boring you to death, if at all possible. I confess to being somewhat embittered by my previous run-ins with the law. My suggestion to you the reader is to read this with a suspicious eye. Hopefully you will find some good information here. Some of this most probably will need to be considered and rejected or revised. I do not claim to have all the answers. If you are not inclined to listen to a lecture, maybe now would be a good time to close the book and go on down the road. I have a hard time in seeing anything humorous in the subject I am about to address, so I won't even try. For those of you genuinely concerned with the state of our nation and the way we deal with illegal drug consumption, continue on.

* * * * *

I have used my spiritual beliefs for a long time as a cop-out. I am of the belief that the best system of government is one described in Biblical writings, where a just God, with Jesus Christ at his side, rules the new earth. In my mind, all of our efforts at government are flawed and doomed to failure—pretenders to the one system that will work. So I sit back and wait for some grand miracle to take place, where Jesus will come back, punish the wicked oppressors, and set up a fair system.

Meanwhile, while I sit on my ass and do nothing,

injustices abound. Two thousand years have gone by. Maybe I need to do something besides sitting around and praying to make a change in this world. Maybe you do too.

I believe that most politicians are corrupt bastards; I think this is a view shared by many. However, I find it easy to sit outside the fence and throw stones. There are sincere, dedicated, hard working people, who have the courage and the conviction to try to make a difference within the present system. Unfortunately, they are usually overcome and their purpose diluted in the rise to power. Time and again they are faced with the choice—conform and succeed, or hang tough to your beliefs and get left out. They compromise—time and again, until none of the good will and intentions they started with are left.

I have thought long and hard on the drug problems of our country. I have hoped for change, but I have done nothing—not one blessed thing, to effect any change. Fear of failure stops me. Fear of rejection stops me. Fear of retribution stops me. Fear of being wrong stops me. The fact that I don't have answers to all the questions stops me. To take a firm stance in this world on a controversial issue is scary, especially when your viewpoint will not be popular among those who run things. Add to that the fact that my viewpoint probably will not find favor with those who still use drugs, and there are plenty of reasons for me to sit on the sidelines, like a good little boy, with my mouth shut, and watch this nation go to hell.

Meanwhile those concrete and steel dungeons—little, hidden pieces of hell on earth, are full—full of people—people like you and me—people like our kids. I sit here nice and comfortable and forget. Honest, well-intentioned cops flounder, risking their very lives, trapped in a system doomed to failure. It is for these that I feel compelled to stand and speak

—those caught in the trenches of this war.

I remember the hole at La Tuna FCI. It has been there for seventy years now. I remember this overwhelming presence in that place, like I could feel the misery of literally thousands of people who lay in that cell over the years, as though each had somehow left a little piece of himself behind. At this moment, some poor soul lies in that same cell; as sure as I now breathe air. Maybe he feels a little of the misery I left behind.

I remember experiencing a similar feeling, to a lesser degree, in the county jail at Los Lunas, New Mexico. A previous occupant of the cell—many years before—had drawn a picture of a cadaverous man, haunting in nature. The painting occupied almost one entire wall of the cell. Time and again, the picture had been painted over; yet, time and again it seeped through the paint—refusing to be erased—refusing to be forgotten. Perhaps inmates along the way had reconstructed it. Whatever the reason—it had survived, and there was power in the work. I will never forget the haunting look of the eyes in that picture. I could palpably feel the pain in those eyes.

My cell at Texarkana FCI for the majority of the time I was there was in the oldest section of the facility. It was designed for one inmate; two of us shared it. It measured five by nine with solid concrete walls and doors of solid metal. The window looked out into a solid cement wall not ten feet away. Someone lies in there, sweating through hot, humid nights and cold winters—wasting. Under current drug laws, he may never get out.

That someone is not suffering alone. He most probably has a family—kids, maybe a wife, almost certainly a dad and a mom. He has friends, cousins, aunts, and uncles. There is better than a fifty per cent chance he is in there for drugs.

You who have no involvement with drugs may say, “Fuck

him! He is getting what he deserves!”

Heed my warning. It may be you, or one of yours in that cell some day. No family in our country is entirely immune to this disease. Drug addiction is an indiscriminate offender, not bound by class or color, race or age, intelligence or social standing.

Watch the news. Our current president's family is afflicted. Robert Downey Jr. (NOTE: This dude's still alive), John Belushi, Chris Farley, Ernest Hemingway, and countless others have succumbed to drug addiction. Perhaps there are more poor people in jail for dealing or smuggling; they were not privileged like the rich, or our current president, with enough money to buy them; they had to sell drugs to support their habits. And, when it is our little privileged boy or girl that falls into addiction, why—it is those God damned dealers, smugglers, spics, and niggers who are responsible—by God!

When it's our country's drug habits that are addressed, those in fault are all those other corrupt countries producing the stuff that are to blame. Never mind the fact that we spend billions and billions of American dollars to have them grow it for us—to our exacting specifications, no less.

I remember trying out that excuse on my dad and mom at a very early age. “It was so and so's fault!” *There had to be somebody else to blame!* That excuse did not fly far in my home. I got a quick lesson on accountability.

We now rail against the sellers of sin—the corrupt bastards filling our Internet with sex sites. Right now the nearby city of Austin and many others across our land are full of businesses selling sex. If someone weren't visiting those sites, they would go out of business. To keep as many as I have seen in Austin going, there are a whole hell of a lot of someones out there. It is you and I, John W. Public that support those

businesses. It is you and I that keep the dealer dealing, the smuggler smuggling, and the grower growing. (NOTE: I'd recommend changing that: grower, smuggler, dealer.) If there weren't a hell of a lot of us willing to spend our hard earned money to buy drugs, all of the above would soon be out of business.

To be fair, there are those of you out there who have never spent a dime on illegal drugs, or slid a dollar under the G-string of a tit-bar dancer. Perhaps you have not looked at an Internet porn site, or jacked off to a Hustler magazine. I have news for you. You are surrounded by people who have and do. If they were all locked up, the entire country would come to a grinding halt. The nurse that cares for you, the man who delivers your mail, washes your car, rides your horse, drills your oil well, runs the local gym, teaches at your schools, baby-sits your children, or builds your house may hide a problem. You can and will be affected by this problem. Even our cops have fallen to addiction and the lure of easy money in more cases than I care to remember.

The dealers, smugglers, and growers are at fault. *So are the users.* Our laws are designed on a flawed principle—the principle that says the supplier bears all fault for the user, or that the supply causes the demand. It does not work that way in the real world.

To be sure, we are dealing with addictive substances here. They are, however, no more addictive than alcohol or tobacco. Do we blame Phillip Morris for the fact that many of us smoke ourselves to death, even though it says right on the pack that the shit will kill you? (Some do. They are full of shit too!) Do we blame McDonalds for forcing us to eat hamburgers until we weigh four hundred pounds and develop heart troubles? (Some do—full of shit also!) Is Jack Daniels or

Budweiser responsible because we got drunk and ran over someone with our car? Maybe they all do share *some* of the blame, but for the biggest part, the person that knowingly, and willingly, puts these substances into his or her body, is responsible for his or her own actions. The majority of us in this day and time have all heard the news. No one else is to blame when we abuse drugs. Want to put dealers out of business? Quit buying their products.

Likewise, the whore and the tit-bar dancer would soon be looking for another occupation if we stopped buying their product. So long as the market exists, someone will step up to the plate to fill the need—an endless number of someones.

I remember well what a young convicted Colombian drug smuggler told me one time, concerning cocaine. It went something like this:

“If I went to a poor town, anywhere in Colombia, and sat down with a huge pile of cocaine—and told the people that each could have one kilo on credit—and that all he or she had to do was to sneak it into the United States, and if they made it, they would earn fifteen thousand dollars—and if they were caught, they would have to spend many years in prison—there would be a line—miles long—within hours—of people willing to take that risk for their one chance in a lifetime to escape the poverty they have grown up in, and will die in, otherwise. Fifteen thousand dollars to a poor Colombian is enough money to start a business that will feed his family for years. Consider how hard it would be to accumulate that much money if you earned five dollars a day for back-breaking labor.” (At that time, this would have been a profitable scenario for the dealer as well.)

Colombia is one of many countries standing in line to receive the dollars we so eagerly throw at anyone willing to

satisfy our cravings for drugs. Are we going to lock up the whole world, or kill them all, to stop the flow of drugs into our country? If we do, someone right here, in our own country will fill the order; as sure as I am sitting here. Even as I speak, there is a trend for more and more of the marijuana we smoke to be grown here and in Canada. The total poundage produced may not compete with Latin varieties, but because of the potency of the weed (one pound may contain five to ten times the TCH), the ounce buyer of Mexican marijuana buys this domestic dope in grams. Under this equation then, each of these domestically produced pounds would need to be multiplied by a factor of five to ten to arrive at an accurate percentage of their share of the market. The point is, they—meaning other countries—are not entirely to blame, but that is the way we want to see it.

The war on drugs will never be won under current policies.

CHAPTER II

Here's a simplified version of how we attack the drug problem in our country:

Because we operate on a system based on the assumption that the small dealer is responsible for people using drugs, the wholesale dealer is more culpable than the local variety, and that the international drug rings are at fault for all of our problems (the farther from home it gets, the easier it becomes to assess blame), most of our enforcement efforts are based on working up the supply ladder. We feel like if we can just get those select few responsible for producing and distributing this stuff, we can eliminate the supply and all our problems will go away.

A guy is caught on the street with a baggie full of marijuana. He is one of thousands. The cop pressures him for information. "Where did you get your dope?" The guy rats on his supplier, a small time local dealer, and the user is set free with a tiny slap on the wrist to go and buy some more from someone else.

The small time dealer is busted, perhaps with a few pounds. The cops want his supplier. In exchange for information leading to the arrest of the local wholesaler, he gets a probated sentence, and most probably is back in business in days, with a new source for his dope.

The wholesaler snitches on the smuggler, in the scenario where the smuggler is an independent operator, or in the case where the smuggler works for larger international wholesalers, the international wholesaler gets the rap.

These fellows are looking at doing serious time. It becomes a question of quantity. *Do you want to do the rest of your life behind bars, or just half of it?* Not surprisingly, large percentages choose the half.

Now, the cops—who are now feds by this point in the game, are forced to deal with forces outside the borders of our own country. One after another smuggler and wholesaler steers

them in the same direction. They compile evidence against the individuals responsible for the drug trade in these countries. When enough evidence is amassed, they go to these countries and solicit cooperation in arresting or detaining these people. The process of building this information is time consuming. The evidence must be compelling to get cooperation. Because the drug trade supplies massive amounts of cash to these predominately poor countries, a good bit of which ends up in the pockets of corrupt politicians—the same ones our agents are forced to deal with in stopping the drug flow—these politicians are reluctant to do anything about it.

Add to that a growing sense by most countries in the world that the United States is a big bully, disrespectful of the sovereignty of other nations, and that the population responsible for putting these foreign politicians in office could care less about our drug problem here in the United States, and you can see why they are reluctant to act.

We are feared though. We do have tremendous power to affect these countries, especially in the financial arena. So these foreign politicians give lip service and turn their backs until the evidence becomes so overwhelming it can no longer be ignored. At that point, the major drug lord's days are doomed. The word goes out. He must be captured. In reality, he must be killed. He has greased the palm of too many *respectful citizens* over the years to be left alive to tell his story. Before he is totally done away with however, he is silently replaced.

His death is received with much fanfare, both here and abroad. We finally got the bastard responsible for an incredible percentage of the world's supply of drugs! While we all slap ourselves on the back, the drugs keep flowing. The faces are new, but the game is the same.

I can add some names and faces to this scenario. Remember Pablo Escobar? The Ochoas? Carlos Lehder? Pablo Acosta? Amado Carillo Fuentes? Each of these was to blame for all our problems. All are dead or incarcerated for life, yet there is more dope on our streets today than when they operated.

(There are good books out there for those of you interested in such matters. One is called “Druglord” written by Terrence Poppa. Mark Bowden calls the second “Killing Pablo”. The first is about Pablo Acosta, an infamous Mexican drug lord; the second is about Pablo Escobar, an infamous Colombian. A recently released book by Charles Bowden called “Down by the Rive” shocked even me, a seasoned veteran of the drug war.)

Thinking, if we hit these guys (dealers and smugglers) harder and harder, with longer and longer sentences, less people will be apt to enter the business; we have reformed our drug laws over the years. Our current federal laws are extremely harsh on drug offenders. Under the comprehensive crime control act of 1984, new sentencing guidelines were constructed for our federal prison system. These laws went into effect in 1987.

I got busted in 1985, escaped in January of 1986, and was recaptured and recharged in December of 1986. I barely slipped in under the “old law”. At the time, I was none too happy about going to prison or the fifteen years I received for smuggling marijuana. I had no idea how fortunate I was to have been caught before this new law took affect. While the time I did was considerable, at least by my way of thinking, had I managed to stay out and active in the marijuana trade for another year, I very well might be writing this piece from a federal institution even today (I most probably would have received at least a twenty year sentence *without possibility for parole* which would mean a minimum of seventeen years behind bars. For marijuana. No cocaine. No speed. No heroin. Just marijuana.)

Any of you out there currently violating federal drug laws should be aware of the severity and the finality of drug sentences being handed out now. Under old law, the judge had quite a bit of discretion when sentencing time came around. A prisoner became eligible for parole after having completed one third of his or her sentence. Mandatory release dates (time, less time off for good behavior) were about two thirds of the prescribed sentence. In other words, an inmate serving a

fifteen-year sentence would be eligible for parole (and in most cases would receive it) after five years behind bars. If, for extenuating circumstances, he or she was not paroled, the most they would serve on that fifteen-year sentence is ten years.

Under current federal law, parole does not exist (except for additional terms of “special parole” added on top of the prison sentence). An inmate can receive a maximum fifty-four days a year off for good behavior. That same fifteen-year sentence means the offender will serve twelve years and eight months, possibly more, but absolutely no less. However, new sentencing guidelines were also issued under this law, and almost without fail; drug cases bring much longer sentences than they did before enactment of this law. A judge’s discretion was taken away and replaced with a complicated formula to determine length of sentences. Given amounts of a given drug place the offender in a category with approximately forty-three levels of severity. Each of these levels carries a narrow range of prescribed punishments. The judge can alter the level slightly, by about two levels up or down, for aggravating or mitigating circumstances, but no more than that. In nearly all cases involving drugs, these sentences will be much longer than sentences prescribed during the early eighties. How much longer?

Did you know that it is possible for a person to get a sentence of life without parole for smuggling a large quantity of marijuana into this country? Life without parole means you never get out—that is, until you die. You leave prison in a box. Beyond that there is even a death penalty for drug crimes. A second offender of larger amounts under these laws is virtually guaranteed twenty years or better. On a twenty-year sentence, you serve seventeen. It does not take too many seventeens to use up a life. In fact, one will do it for most. Even if you do survive, you will be so far behind society by the time you get out that you most probably will never catch up.

We envision our justice system as being the most fair on the earth. Have you ever seen the symbol for justice in our

country? It depicts a woman in a robe, blindfolded, with a scale in hand. While this presents a pretty picture, reality needs to depict her peeking from under the blindfold, and the scale is rigged. She also needs a large hammer in the other hand, used to squash the life out of all she deems fit for such treatment.

Supposedly, this comprehensive crime control act was designed to eliminate discrepancies in sentencing between judges. In reality it brought all judges up to the most radical and severe levels, and the guidelines are not without prejudice. How so, you may ask.

For whatever reason, there are patterns of drug usage and the drug market along the lines of race and wealth of the offender. Drug use and addiction crosses all of these lines. However, the rich kids, like good ole Dubya once was, (he admits to having used cocaine and marijuana though not to the degree truth would dictate), have money to buy their dope. So, they seldom become dealers. The poor, unable to afford the dope, buy larger amounts—provided on credit, and sell off portions at higher costs to pay for their habits. It is from this group that most dealers emerge. As people in the supply chain are busted, others replace them from points lower down the chain. There is an endless supply of these people, growing from the body of users. (The scenario the Colombian inmate described of lines of people willing to take a risk at smuggling, may very well resemble the lines of people in our own inner cities or poor impoverished rural communities willing to do the same).

While I don't know why, certain drugs appeal to specific types and races of people. Crystallized cocaine has long enjoyed favor among rich white folks, perhaps because it is easier to hide, and more compatible with the business world in which they exist. (Being a stimulant, some find it useful to make them more alert, especially in moderate doses.) It is often used to enhance sexual pleasure and taken in conjunction with alcohol, another favorite of this social group. Poor blacks on the other hand, tend to smoke crack cocaine. The drug is the same; it is

the method of introduction into the body that differs. During the era I was involved in the drug business, crystal methamphetamine was popular among poor working class whites—people who went to work every day and needed a long lasting lift. Truck drivers headed the list. Other whites, predominately from the poorer strata, abused the drug in larger quantities. Biker groups dominated the market of the drug. Most of it was produced domestically. Heroin seemed to be favored by many Hispanics. Marijuana crossed many of these barriers, but as a rule was favored by the poorer classes of all races. It is hard to smoke pot and function in the intense pressure settings of the wealthy business world. Its effects and signals of its use are almost impossible to hide.

The white people almost always control the smuggling and supply end of the business in the western hemisphere. Even in Latin countries, the people who run the show are almost always of European descent.

Picture the following scenario: A white guy smuggles a hundred kilos of cocaine into this country. He sells it to others in lots ranging from one to ten kilos. A black guy buys one of these kilos, dissolves it in water, adds some Arm and Hammer baking soda to neutralize the hydrochloric acid used in the crystallization process, heats the mixture and crack cocaine is formed. A kilo of cocaine weighs around thirty-five ounces and change. There may be a slight increase in the weight when it is converted to crack. The *nigger* (blacks become niggers when they sell dope—before you decide to lynch me as a racist for using this word, read the rest of what I have to say) distributes this crack to various associates—all niggers as well, let's say for the purpose of this model, in lots of two ounces. One of these niggers sells a chunk of crack to a young white kid for twenty bucks. The white kid drives down the road, violates a traffic law and is stopped.

The white kid is nervous. He is the son of a senator, living in Washington D.C., and can't afford the shame of being caught with drugs. The cop, trained to notice such things, gets

him out of the car, performs a search and finds the dope. Somewhere between there and the jail, the rich white kid rats out the black street dealer. By the time the cops get back to arrest this guy, he has sold half of one ounce of the two with which he started the day. Often times, this is the end of the story, as most blacks tend to be less cooperative with the authorities (to their credit), but in this case, the black guy caught is an adult with a prior conviction and savvy to the workings of the law. He knows that since he has been caught in D.C., his crime will fall under federal jurisdiction, and he knows he is in very deep trouble. He was also within a certain distance of a school, another no-no. After a day in jail, he tells on his supplier.

The following day a raid is performed on the black guy that turned the cocaine into crack. Most of the drug has all ready been distributed, but six ounces remain—a major haul where crack is concerned. This guy's house happens to be in D.C. as well. Against all odds, the cops have found two cooperative black men. This one rats out the main supplier—the white smuggler. The cops have hit a grand slam!

The white guy's house is raided, but only four kilos remain of the load—still a significant amount, but nowhere near what had been there just days before.

The rich kid—son of the senator, is released, and the whole thing is hushed over. He gets grounded for two weeks, and has to ride to school with his friends instead of his own car. Someone else will have to drive when he scores his next rock.

The remaining three all plea guilty in federal court. You can't beat the feds on a drug case. The judge reviews their cases and puts them in various slots prescribed by the law under current sentencing guidelines. Because what the guy caught on the street had was crack—not crystallized cocaine, the amount he was caught with is multiplied by a factor of *one hundred* for sentencing purposes. He was caught with an ounce and a half, or forty-two grams.

The judge multiplies forty-two by one hundred and

determines that this man's offense must be calculated as though he had 4.2 kilos in his possession. However, because he admitted to having had fifty-six grams at the beginning of the day, he is placed in the same category reserved for those caught with five kilos. The guy he turned in was just another nigger, so he gets little credit for it. (Not all judges are prejudiced, but it does happen, more than any of you want to think.)

The black guy that cooked up the crack was caught with six ounces, and will not admit to any more. He might be somewhat smarter than his brother. The judge multiplies this amount by a hundred and determines that those six ounces of crack equate 16.8 kilos of cocaine for sentencing purposes.

The white honkey keeps his mouth shut, because he has no one in this country to give up, and also knows that anything he says can and will be used against him. He is sentenced for possession with intent to distribute four kilos of cocaine.

Under the guidelines of the justice system the sentences are as follows: The street nigger with the ounce and a half of crack gets twenty years in prison, because he crossed the five-kilo threshold under the law, and is a multiple offender, qualifying him for a minimum mandatory sentence. Had he not been a second offender, he still would have faced at least ten years for his crime. The wholesaler caught with the six ounces gets slightly more time, because he too is a second offender and guidelines call for a heavier sentence. The white guy thinks he is going to get a break. Technically, the law entitles him to one. The judge, being a little sharper than he thinks, knows there had to have been more at one time, but is unable to prove it. Because this guy is a first offender, he gets ten years, which is above what is prescribed for the four kilos, but the minimum for five kilos or more for a first offender. (The judge has the discretion to deviate slightly from prescribed sentences for aggravating or mitigating factors.) Never mind the fact that the hundred kilos of coke with which he started was turned into a hundred kilos of crack, which multiplied by a hundred would be ten thousand kilos under sentencing

guidelines—enough to lock a whole bus load of niggers away for the rest of their natural lives.

Justice, American style!

I am willing to admit that this scenario is contrived to make a point; however, the sentences are in fact what a judge would be *forced* to give the offenders. We need to hire honorable people as judges, give them discretion in sentencing, and trust their judgment. If they are not worthy of that trust, replace them. There are far too many variables to be considered to have it all fit in a neat little mathematical formula. The vast majority of federal judges out there do not like this system. I should also point out, that if the scenario were reversed where it was a black man that smuggled the cocaine, and white guys that turned it into crack, the outcome would be reversed; the white guys would end up hammered. In the real world, it seldom works that way.

Under the first scenario, by my way of thinking, what the white smuggler got is an extremely harsh sentence—extreme, but some might say—still in the arena of fairness for a hundred kilos. What the two black men received is totally out of line, at least by my way of thinking. In light of what the three convicted men received, it is a crime against humanity to release the rich white kid unpunished. The way guidelines are constructed for cocaine crimes; they are inherently biased against black men, and their proclivity for smoking and selling crack instead of snorting cocaine. Consequently, a disproportionate number of young black men now occupy federal prisons (crime schools) for relatively minor amounts of cocaine.

There was not one black senator, when the bill was passed, nor is there one at the time of this writing.⁵

Crystal meth, the drug of choice among many poor whites also gets you hammered, although not as bad as does

⁵I mean no offense in the above scenario by using the word *nigger*. It is used only for effect and to give you a glimpse at the way some white men talk behind closed doors. They'll deny this. They lie. I have been accused of being a *nigger lover*, and a *Mescan' lover* as well. I hope and pray my accusers are right.

crack. The multiple applied there is on a ten to one ratio, or thereabouts with cocaine. (A half a kilo of meth equals five kilos of cocaine for sentencing purposes.) Heroin, favored by Hispanics, will get an offender locked away *forever* in relatively small amounts.

I saw a disturbing trend of young—very young—poor white boys entering prison with terribly long sentences for involvement with the cooking of meth. I felt like a good ass kicking and thirty days in the hole would probably cure most of these kids. Instead, they are now in crime school. When they are released, they will be unable to function in this world. The one thing they will have learned is how to be an effective criminal, at all kinds of crimes they would have otherwise known little or nothing about.

I am of the opinion that, across the board, penalties, from the perspective of time given, are excessive, especially when you consider the fact that we allow people to legally consume alcohol and cigarettes in this country.

“So, Mr. Big shot,” some of you might be saying at about this point, referring to me, “you have badmouthed our system for dealing with smugglers and dealers. What do you suggest as an alternative?”

And my knees grow weak. And my voice becomes a whisper. This is a complex problem we face. It is easy to stand back and throw rocks at it. Coming up with viable alternatives that will work is a difficult—some say impossible task. I may not have all the answers, but I do have some suggestions worth consideration, or at least I think so.

CHAPTER III

Any law concerning drug consumption or trafficking must take the rights and needs of all our citizenry into account to be fair. Many on the user side say, “We’re not hurting anybody but ourselves.”

In some cases that may be true. In others, it is not. The drugs you use or sell are harmful, some more than others. Most are addictive. Most hurt productivity in our country. Some cause impaired motor skills leading to harming or even killing others while in operation of a motor vehicle or a piece of machinery. Some cause disease, the cost of which we all must cover with government and private insurance payments. And of course, the trade of these items is not taxed. While that may not mean much to you, in the eyes of Uncle Sam, it is a biggy. I have seen twenty-five year sentences imposed for violation of income tax laws. Our government gets serious when you don’t pay your taxes.

Others that don’t use drugs will ask, *why should we have to pay for what others do?* Maybe you shouldn’t have to, but you will, one way or another.

China had a policy to stop heroin use in its country. It worked. If you got caught with heroin, you would be forced to kneel in front of an armed soldier and be unceremoniously shot in the back of the head. Then your family would be charged for the bullet used to shoot you. Is that what your vision of America looks like? I hope not. Remember, those people using this stuff are us, not some imaginary enemy out there.

Consider this: We could identify every user out there with mandatory drug screening and lock up the whole bunch. Which states are you prepared to fence off to hold this crowd? And what of all the job vacancies, abandoned homes and children? Who will pay for maintaining this horde of incarcerated people? We all ready have the world’s largest prison population, and our taxes pay to operate these facilities.

At what point do we want the government to step in and

mandate how we live our lives? We once made alcohol illegal. It did not work. Criminal enterprises similar to our drug cartels of today sprang up to fill the needs and wants of our citizenry. Huge amounts of illegal money ended up in the hands of criminals and violent confrontations erupted. Sound familiar?

So, what should we do?

First, decriminalize marijuana. Face the facts: regardless of what you've been led to believe, marijuana is not substantially more dangerous than either alcohol or tobacco. There are those that say it's less dangerous. I tend to agree.

When substances desired by our population are made illegal, their value increases exponentially. It costs very little to grow marijuana. It is valuable only because it is illegal. Decriminalization would kill the illegal business. Absolutely. Think of all the prisons that would no longer be necessary.

You might be surprised that in places where it has been decriminalized, its use has not increased significantly. I know I wouldn't use it if it were legal. Cigarettes are legal; not everyone smokes them. Alcohol is legal; not everyone drinks. All of these substances are potentially harmful; some choose to use them nevertheless. It does not seem they can be forced to stop. Laws which allow legal consumption of alcohol and tobacco and severely punish those who use marijuana are unjust.

I don't advocate making it available anytime anywhere for anybody. In countries like Holland an adult can go to a coffee shop and buy one gram a day. It still is illegal for minors to possess it or for anyone to sell it on the street. Coincidentally, the percentage of teenagers in Holland that use marijuana is lower than those who do so in our country.

Controls will have to be implemented to fine or punish those that drive while overly intoxicated. Quality and concentration of the product will need to be controlled much like we do alcohol today. The amount one can have or consume legally will have to be restricted.

I think we should also consider legalizing coca leaf. I am told that when used as an herbal tea, it is a relatively mild

stimulant not unlike alcohol. The problem with cocaine is the extremely concentrated form in which it is now sold. Perhaps licensed bars and coffee shops could distribute diluted forms of coca drinks.

Now comes the hard part. What about cocaine, and other hard drugs?

Cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, PCP, LSD, and other highly refined and concentrated substances are so inherently dangerous that I do not see how they can be totally legalized or unrestricted. To legalize them would be akin to handing out guns with the barrels pointed backwards. No one who loves his country and its people would wish this upon them. *Some sort of control has to be exercised over these substances.* Having said this, I do not feel that our present system of throwing people in prison for the rest of their lives is the solution to the problem.

Also, these substances do have legitimate medicinal uses and should be available in some form by prescription from a doctor.

I know I keep repeating this, but this enemy out there is us. How do you want your children treated when they succumb to an illness? The bottom line is that drug abuse is an illness, both a physical and a social illness. Addiction should be treated as a disease rather than as a crime. Prison should be the last resort used in only the worse of cases, where addiction leads to other predatory crimes. There are other incentives that can be used to encourage people to live sober lives.

For those that sell hard drugs, prison must remain a deterrent.

But the way we now run prisons is counterproductive.

Because we do not believe in torture and inhumane treatment, prisons are not terribly uncomfortable places, unless you find yourself in the disciplinary section—as I described earlier. Prison populations enjoy recreation periods, have TV, freedom to move about and interact for the majority of each day. A good part of each day is spent interacting with other

criminals, learning and perfecting tricks of the trade. For most, all of this is just a huge waste of time.

Their families outside of the prison also suffer due to their absence. The numbers are huge.

I went to prison a low to mid level marijuana smuggler. Had I not actively resisted opportunities presented me, I could have left with the ability to go get literally tons of cocaine—on credit. This is typically what happens. A relatively novice criminal enters prison; a seasoned professional leaves. That makes no sense.

An inmate is likely to get out of prison someday and you're going to have to deal with him again. Statistics prove that longer sentences do not make any difference where recidivism is concerned.

To me it seems that a person can only be contrite for so long. Many inmates come into prison and consider all they have lost and repent. But then there's no reconciliation. The sentence is carved in stone. Years go by and like the dog that keeps getting beaten long after he has corrected his offensive behavior, an inmate becomes bitter and resentful.

He loses touch with the outside world and when he is released, he has little left in the way of useful job skills. What's the man to do?

Here is what I propose:

Make prisons places where no one in their right mind wants to be, similar to the hole at La Tuna, or El Reno Oklahoma—places for penance. A month in the hole is worth years of time in the population of a modern American prison from the standpoint of potential reformation of the offender. Short intense periods of incarceration have a much better chance of working. You don't have to be inhumane to be tough. Isolation and loneliness are powerful weapons. Give the man some time in solitary confinement—a five by nine piece of total isolation in concrete and steel. Then offer voluntary treatment programs and psychological help for those that desire them in exchange for sentence reductions.

Parolees need intense supervision, and constant drug screening. Perhaps more halfway house type facilities are needed as opposed to prisons, places where drug abuse classes are required, so offenders can gradually be reintegrated into society. Violations should be greeted with instant retribution—back to the fucking hole, brother.

We need to make ourselves accountable for drug use on an individual basis, and on a national basis. It does no good to blame these other countries for producing drugs for our consumption. Simply targeting the supply end of the equation without identifying users and making them uncomfortable, will not work.

When I was busted, never once in my experience was I asked, “Who do you sell your dope to?”

It was always the supplier they were after. *Why don't the cops go down the chain of supply as well as up it?* When you catch the guy with the kilo, use him to identify the guy buying the ounces. When the guy buying the ounces is caught, use him to identify the ultimate consumers. One major supplier who talks after being caught will identify numerous smaller dealers. They in turn, have the potential to identify users. *This step alone, properly applied, would identify the majority of those using illegal drugs.*

Now I'm pissing off you who want to use the shit, am I not? You have been right there with me, up to this point, nodding your heads in agreement.

I'm not suggesting kicking your door in. A simple phone call or a citation in the mail will do. Or your name added to a computer for the next time you happen to get stopped on a routine traffic stop. But if you use illegal drugs, *you need to know you will get caught.* No question about it.

We could identify users using the above model, virtually all of them, catch them, and then issue fines. Publish their names in the newspaper. Suspend driver's licenses and other social privileges and then provide help for those willing to quit—treatment for their illness. Compliance would be rewarded

with suspension or reduction of fines and reinstated privileges. We can't possibly lock up everyone using illegal drugs in this country. Why would we want to anyway? The goal should be to get them off of harmful drugs.

Because the users of these substances endanger the rest of us when they drive under their influence, why not require a drug screen in order to get a driver's license—perhaps a hair sample, so as not to be so invasive, and to be more effective? Come up dirty, and your license is suspended and your name published. The only way out is enrollment in a treatment program, and quitting. Continue to come up dirty and lose your license. Continue to use and drive without a license; at that point you endanger the rest of us, and then you go to jail, for a brief but extremely uncomfortable stay. Forgiveness, treatment, and reconciliation should be offered all along the line for those genuinely wanting to quit.

Because we all pay for your habit, perhaps other benefits we enjoy as Americans should be reserved for those who control themselves, and denied those who don't. Use your imagination here.

My wife thinks this approach is far too radical; most in this country probably will. I don't have a problem with it. Most of you without anything to hide won't either. Since our military has started a screening program, drug use has fallen drastically. The one great fear I do have is the potential for abuse. Let me go on record here as saying our present government has not instilled much in the way of confidence in me.

Perhaps a viable alternative to this could be drug screening on a voluntary basis. Those who prove they live sober lives, abstaining from even the harmful legal drugs like alcohol, tobacco and marijuana could then qualify for cheaper insurance rates, and possibly even tax rebates.

What I advocate is not some way of extracting revenge on those who use drugs. These are tactics to encourage people to quit doing things that are harmful to themselves and the rest of us. The end desire should always be one based on love of

your neighbor. Unfortunately, just as the parents of all children know, sometimes, true love must be tough love.

For those who do wish to use drugs and can do so without hurting others, who will not drive under their influence, and will accept the loss of privileges they must endure because of their actions, let them sit in their house and do as much of the shit as they want, perhaps until it kills them. They won't be anybody's heroes, like many who use them today are now thought of.

We need to control ourselves, both as individuals, and as a nation, and accept responsibility for our own actions when we don't.

In the most extreme cases under this system, where time after time, an offender refuses to change, and their behavior adversely affects others, prisons as we now know them would still be necessary (hopefully less of them), with long and in some cases never-ending sentences, like those presently employed. This should be the last resort—not the first choice.

As for foreign producers, if we implemented what I suggest here, I suspect that you would see a dramatic reduction of the demand for their products and a whole lot less money leaving our country for the stuff. Let them choke on their own products.

Perhaps we could offer incentives above those currently available for those who do not use illegal drugs, like income tax rebates for voluntary enrollment in a screening program to prove sobriety, or reduced rates on insurance premiums. Sober people deserve them—they are less likely to have accidents, or get sick.

We need to make fundamental changes in the way we think about drugs, both legal and illegal in this country. Of that, I'm sure.

SUMMARY

In summary, we need to bring marijuana laws into line with those governing alcohol and tobacco. I think incentives should be provided to discourage the use of all of the above—but not jail or prison time—unless your habit hurts others, as in the case of intoxicated drivers, and abusive or neglectful parents, spouses or neighbors.

A system designed to identify users needs to be put in place.

Users snared by these measures should not be jailed for use alone, but denied privileges instead—privileges we now all take for granted.

Treatment programs need to be developed.

Shock prison terms of a short but intense nature should be given to those who deal in hard drugs. Treatment must be offered these people.

For the worst of those, who persist in harming others, prisons as we now know them will continue to be necessary.

We need to provide additional benefits to those who live clean, sober lives.

The suggestions I make here would not eliminate the drug abuse problem in our country, but, I do believe they would work better than our present system, and would be a fairer, more just alternative, more in line with what I believe America is supposed to be about.

Now that I have most probably successfully managed to piss off nearly everybody involved in this complicated issue, I will shut my mouth, sit back, and most probably watch things continue as they now do. I hope I am wrong.

I tried, anyway.

AFTERWORD

My biggest concern and that of others who have read this is trusting our government not to abuse its authority. I see movement toward further and further restrictions of our rights and liberties as Americans, and cannot help but be troubled by this. However, violating drug laws is no one's legal right in this land.

Some advocate decriminalization or legalization of all drugs. While I do believe this *would* kill the illegal business, I fear it would create rampant addiction and loss of life and health for many of our citizens. Perhaps administering these drugs in controlled settings to addicts would work; this has been tried in other places with some success.

It is much easier to identify the problems with our current system, than it is to come up with viable alternatives. I hope and pray that this piece will inspire others to join me in search of better ways to deal with the problem of drug addiction in our country.

Mine is only one voice in the debate.