

Finding Tobias

Fighting the Demon known as Prescription Drug Abuse

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M.O.M. – Mothers-Against Oxy-Morons

Introduction – Confronting a Beast

A day does not go by in America when a life is not lost or ruined due to opiate prescription drug abuse. In an article published on July 16, 2010, ABC News reported that pain medicine addiction had risen “400 percent in the last decade”. Although that statistic is daunting enough, it does nothing to describe the horror and terror this demon wields on a family when it strikes home personally.

As the mother of a prescription drug addict, I can attest that life as I used to know it stopped on March 7, 2007, when my son was injured in an automobile accident.

Although I did not know it until a few months later, because he never told me how much he hurt, my son’s back had been severely injured. After consulting with injury lawyers and being referred to a chiropractor and a pain management clinic, hell on Earth began.

As his abuse of OxyContin grew, my son’s ability to craft extremely intricate lies grew as well and initially, my desire to not rock the boat caused me to turn a blind eye. Also, since he did not live with me, I had no daily reference to gauge his behavior. His nervousness and slurred speech during family gatherings did not go un-noticed but confrontation would have ruined the event and his elaborate excuses always seemed to outweigh those consequences.

When I finally convinced my son to go with me to consult a top orthopedic surgeon in very reputable teaching hospital in Florida, I was not only shocked when that expert announced that “he had never seen such a bad back in such a young man,” I felt guilty that I had not spurred my boy into serious action sooner. Chiropractors and

questionably legal pain management clinics had only made the time between the car accident and now, more unbearable.

Two major operations ensued. The first operation in late 2008 was a microdiscectomy to treat L-4, L-5, and S-1 herniations. It involved removing parts of the bulging discs, and adding cadaver bone and hardware to help repair the damage. When the hardware began to slip, the second operation was performed in the summer of 2009. Each time he left the hospital, OxyContin was proscribed.

After the first operation, I stayed with my son while he recuperated, and followed the pain pill directions carefully when I let him have one. After the second operation, since the hospital would not dismiss him without that script again, I ripped it up when I got him into the car.

What many people may not know is how powerfully addicting opiate medications such as OxyContin, Oxycodone, Hydrocodone, and their acetaminophen combined partners such as Percocet and Roxicet can be when abused.

Addicts, including my son have tried to explain how and why they spiraled out of control on these medications. Most of the people I have spoken with, since I began to confront this beast head on, have related that they were first introduced to opiates via valid prescriptions due to pain from injuries.

As their tolerance of the drug increased, the desire to take more also increased. When their prescriptions ran out, their desperation to get their hands on pills illegally was spurred by the fear of what would happen if and when they tried to “come off” of them. As you can read in numerous articles in the newspaper or on the internet the side effects, which are severe can also be lethal. Depression, nervousness, chills, confusion, insomnia,

and low blood pressure, have all been reported as some of the potential adverse reactions associated with discontinuance of opiates.

So what do you do when you need more of these drugs and cannot get your hands on them legally? You Doctor Shop the planet, as my son did, never telling one that you have been to another. You find out the name of unscrupulously notorious physicians, (and take it from me, there are plenty out there), who have no problem proscribing large quantities of opiates to patients who complain of being in pain. You consult with other addicted individuals to find out which 'Pain Management Clinics' also have no problem scripting 'Oxys and Roxys' to anyone.

But aren't opiates expensive? Oh yes, very. So how does an addict afford to keep his habit going? Well, you can do what my son did. You can lie, cheat, steal, pawn property that belongs to your parents, other siblings, or anyone else that you can get your hands on. You can get hold of your next script and sell each pill at between \$11 and \$15 dollars, which we all know is considered trafficking. The malevolent spirit inhabiting my son's body did all of that.

As testimony to one of my worst experiences, when I returned home from the hospital after a breast cancer mastectomy I discovered that my hidden purse and check books had been found and my bank account cleaned out completely.

After five arrests, all related to OxyContin abuse, we may have just hit bottom for the last time. Each time he has been arrested, however, (all of his incarcerations were for non-violent offenses) he has sworn that he has learned his lesson and will never touch the demon again. He wants to find a good job. He wants to finish his college education, but

let me tell you how that works. No-one wants to hire a felon, and so the new demons associated with rejection, depression, and low self-esteem arise.

I am not giving up. I am focused on helping my son discover positive things he can still accomplish with his life. I am writing this book in collaboration with others who have been through similar torture. We are trying to spread the word, to offer lessons learned, in order to fight this evil. In the meantime, my eyes are open wide. I know what to look for. I know the signs. This monster is not getting past me again!

Section One

Bobby's Story



In Memoriam - James Robert "Bobby" Hafley

[January 24, 1972 - June 15, 2004]

A Train Wreck Begins . . .

The engine roars. Wheels clack, and squeal on steel as the train rumbles down its winding path. Brakes hiss and moan as it slows, steam belches from its smokestack. A shrill whistle blasts the air apart. It can be heard for miles.

Those sounds defined Bobby's life. Like a runaway engine he sped down the tracks searching for a way to stop, searching for a place to find safe harbor. This is his story, written by me, as recounted by his mother. It is the story of the de-railing of a young man that began when he was just a boy in Cincinnati. It began in a street next to a train yard.

Clickety Clack, sometimes you can never go back.

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The Baltimore and Ohio railroad (B&O) has a long and varied history. The first commercial railroad in the U.S., built in the 1800's before the Civil War, it was, in the beginning very profitable.

The years that interceded were not kind to B&O. Because of mismanagement and government interference, it went bankrupt in 1901 and became part of the Pennsylvania Railroad operation. In 1963 it changed corporate hands again and became part of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway. It was, however, still called B&O.

On October 14, 1975, a twenty three year old railroad detective shot and killed Gary Allen Hafley, at 3020 Enyart Avenue, in the Oakley section of Cincinnati just outside of the B&O train yard there.

A newspaper commentary published in the Post the next day, reported that the guard, “a Western Hills man, was checking railroad box cars when a car pulled up beside him.” According to the article, the guard had parked his personal vehicle on the street in such a way that it was blocking other cars from passing.

Gary and an unidentified companion apparently asked the man (quote from the Post) “if being a guard entitled him to block the street.”

When he didn’t move his vehicle but walked to the back of theirs to take down the license number, Gary and his passenger got out of the car. They were unarmed.

Post: “The guard told police that Hafley ignored an order to halt, and that’s when he shot him.”

Gary died there on the street, the victim of a gunshot wound to the chest. His homicide might not sound like a significant event in the scheme of things. It might not have stopped the world in its tracks, but it was a mind boggling, life changing issue for his family.

Gary was only twenty six years old. He was the father of a three year old son, James Robert “Bobby” Hafley and the husband of twenty one year old Sandy Cheek Hafley.

In other articles published in both the Post and the Cincinnati Enquirer, the guard “was held to the Hamilton County Grand Jury on a charge of murder.” Bond was set at a hefty (my words) five hundred dollars.

On December 2, 1975 the Grand Jury failed to indict the guard. Gary’s wife and family were not allowed to attend the hearings. Records were sealed. Later, when she

tried to find him, Sandy, Gary's wife, told me the witness who had been with him that evening abandoned his apartment and vanished into thin air.

[Hmmm, makes me wonder.]

I really wasn't sure, as Sandy began her recount of Bobby's Story, what a railroad detective was . . . what their job entailed, so I had to do some research.

What I discovered was, that depending on the state you live in, railroad detectives can be given authority that is equal to certified police officers, special company agents or deputized police officers.

According to Wikipedia, in the state of Virginia, for example, the president of a railroad can appoint his/her own railroad detectives who, in essence, become the railroad president's own personal police force.

Whenever I hear the word 'appoint' it makes me wonder. Was the 'appointee' really qualified or was their assignment the result of nepotism? Were they trained to handle firearms, coached to not use excessive force when situations do not warrant it? Maybe today there is more religion in that regard, but in 1975 . . . [Hmmm.]

Yeah, so, I will acknowledge that the crucial responsibilities of present day railroad detectives include real, viable threats that can be levied against a line or any one of their passengers. I believe strongly that trying to blow-up or de-rail a train anywhere in the world is a threat that should be dealt with harshly.

I also believe that a thief trying to pickpocket a passenger or steal valuables from the luggage compartment should be held accountable to a jury of his peers.

But does an unarmed man asking for someone to move their car deserve to be shot in cold blood and left to die? Absolutely not!

In the final scheme of things, Sandy and Bobby had to move back in with her parents. Naturally that put a strain on both families.

“You don’t know what it was like for Bobby to grow up without a dad”, Sandy told me. “I believe it contributed to his feeling of poor self-worth. Other kids had dads to root for them when they played sports and stuff. Bobby didn’t. He always told me how much that hurt him.”

Being the divorced mother of two sons who had a dad that was hardly ever present at sports events, I understand exactly how Bobby must have felt.

Little League Baseball fathers were the bane of my existence when my sons were growing up. When you came in contact with a real fanatic, forget how talented your child might be. The fanatic’s son was making the plays. A little league mom volunteer had no chance of evening the fairness odds ---- none!

This book is not about me and it’s not about Little League. It’s about prescription drug addicts and how and why they chose the path they did. What defining moments, critical happenstance drove them to choose to obfuscate (darken, obscure, cloud, dim) their minds.

And this particular story is about Bobby, Sandy’s son who died way too early on the runaway train of his own making.

Clickety Clack, sometimes you can never go back but sometimes, *sometimes you can* help someone else avoid a similar crash.