

a v.i.p. and me

(very interesting person)

By KATHLEEN A. HICKS

"I'll be honest and open with you — I'm not ashamed of what I did previously because there has been a complete change over in me the past two years. That is why I feel this column is necessary. As a result of that, I think I am a better person. My aim in life now is to be good in God's eyes."



DANNY CAMERON:

From drugs to religion

Centrefielder — Mississauga Sabres

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ME: You have admitted to me your venture into the drug world. Tell me how you were first introduced to this type of existence.

DANNY: When I got out of school at 17, I used to hang around the pool hall mostly — I would say I was a bum. I didn't really care about working too much, although I had jobs, as an apathetic attitude, and more-or-less just hung around the poolroom with the boys and we would drink. I wasn't really searching for anything. I was just being one of the boys. Eventually, a friend of mine went to San Francisco and when he came back that's when I got started. He was talking to me about marijuana and drugs and all the money he had — and he had it, too. He had a house rented down there and he used to have a helicopter come in and pick him up. I really thought it was something and was impressed at that age. He was the same age as me and I did have a job working with him and his father at this company, and he packed it in, saying he was going on to bigger and better things. That's how I eventually got started through this guy, and all of a sudden it was spreading everywhere — to my friends. He was the number one guy and everyone wanted to be like him. It was a matter of who could turn on the most, who can be the coolest and who can be the most stoned — it's a phony life. I wouldn't classify myself as a real drug addict or anything like that, just a person who wanted to be like everyone else, and unfortunately I was caught up with hash and marijuana. I didn't get into the pills or the heavy stuff, although all my friends were. It was the fact that I was involved in sports — baseball and hockey — that kept me away from the real heavy drugs — sports have always been the big thing in my life. I could see what the heavy drugs were doing to my friends. I've always had trouble with my weight and I try to keep it up as much as I can — and speed knocks it right out of you. Boy, I have seen friends of mine 180 pounds go down to 150 and less; they don't care — they are just grooving all the time. People used to call me a speed-freak anyway, because I'm so active and have to be moving all the time. I'm an avid exerciser and I like to keep in shape for my sports.

ME: Your wife — then your girl friend — was also into

drugs. How did you two meet and communicate in the beginning of your relationship?

DANNY: I was working at a wallpaper factory in the sample department and she was working in the art department. One day, she just walked by — this is the truth — and I looked at her and I knew that's the one for me. I really didn't have any designs on getting married either; I don't know what it was. I had been out with lots of girls and I had never given marriage too much thought. It was funny, I couldn't understand it. When we first met, we were really opposites; but as you are married, you come together. I was involved in marijuana and hash and when I talked to her, she was, too. The first time we got together, we smoked up. I went to her place and we got stoned. It was as simple as that. It wasn't the usual let's get dressed up and go out to such and such a place, the way it should be done really when I think about it now. We had a free and easy spirit with each other; we had no inhibitions whatsoever. We just felt the idea was to be free — the young generation in thing. And I must say it is wrong. It's not right to be that way.

ME: Was it simple to come up with the drugs you required?

DANNY: Very simple — I didn't even have to pay for it either, because of the abundance that my friends had. I had been smoking so long and I knew everyone and they shared it. I can laugh and smile about it now and think it was love and peace, you know, and it's damaging, because it leads to bigger things. People say, "Well, it's okay, I'm only smoking marijuana." But when I think of those friends now, they are all involved in heavy drugs and they've gone off the deep end. It leads to bigger things unless you get out. I would like to make that point clear, because people who say they can turn on and off are just kidding themselves.

ME: It has always come to my mind the curiosity as to what a person's thoughts are when he or she is under the influence of drugs. Having been there, can you put it into words for me?

DANNY: Having been stoned, I have to say the thoughts are weird, really. There are so many different feelings that you experience; I would say it is different with each person. Some people will smoke up and they don't even get off — they won't experience anything. I enjoyed smoking hash and marijuana. I enjoyed being stoned at that time; it was a pleasurable and peaceful feeling. There has been a lot of talk about it being psychological — psyche yourself up — and I

think it can be. You try to induce it and your surroundings have a lot to do with it, and being in a psychedelic type place with others thinking the same way you are. The feelings you got were peaceful, serene, and sometimes you were sexually turned on. The marijuana and hash are a peace inducement and you're uninhibited, there's no worry, no sweat, you're free and there's no problem. You're not worried about a job, all you care about is then. When the drugs start to wear off and you come down, you might get depressed; you're always looking and searching. The big thing then was the identity scene; I've got to find my identity. And people were always trying to be cool. I might add that marijuana really makes you stop and think a lot. My wife when she was going to University used to smoke it up quite a bit; she did get a degree, but she smoked a lot, probably more than I did. It's all a matter of putting your mind to it. You can smoke up or take up — these are some of the expressions — if you took up a couple of joints and get stoned, if you have to you can get straight. Apathy is the biggest thing; you don't care about doing anything. And when you're really stoned, you can't get too upset with people. It's a who-cares type attitude. You get on a drug where it induces that, then where are you? You're really nowhere. It's been a couple of years now since I've been stoned, and all that has happened in my past. With my new nature, the old things are dead. My new nature is at war with my old nature; my old nature wants to do things I used to do — it's a constant battle. I want my new nature to take over and my old nature just to be deadened all the time, so that my new nature can grow — it's the only way.

ME: What fantasies did you use to experience?

DANNY: A lot of people fantasize under the influence of drugs. It would be hard for me to describe them because they differ. You would be stoned and think you saw different things; sometimes you would see something and it really wasn't what you would normally see. Certain things become distorted; it's usually a moving object. You're more acutely aware of everything and your mind has the capacity to distort them; things that were moving would always fool you. The only way I can describe it is to tell you about the times I played hockey. I used to get stoned before a hockey game and I would just think I was playing great, and I was told later that I was playing terrible. But to me, I was in my own world; I was really enjoying it all. Ten games would go

Apathy is the biggest thing; you don't care

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by and I wouldn't have a goal, and normally I would score every game. That's what the drugs did — they just fake you out — you're just fooled.

ME: Did your parents ever discover your use of drugs?

DANNY: I'm pretty sure my Dad did. I was living at home, and he had seen it before, but he never said too much. It was very easy to hide it from them. A person on it would never smoke in his own home when his parents were around, because someone would smell it for sure. I told my parents about it after I was married. My mother is very open; she tried it once, but she didn't get stoned because she didn't inhale properly — just puffed it mechanically. She was waiting and nothing happened. Then she probably thought — Why worry about it? I want to give credit to my parents — my Dad's passed away now — but, I can't say enough about them; they never put me down for anything I ever did.

ME: When did you come to the conclusion that you had to quit?

DANNY: It wasn't that I came to a conclusion, it was that after I got married we were stoned all the time and neither of us was working. We didn't care about anything, just getting stoned and getting together with people. We had a Ukranian wedding and we got everything from furniture to money. We just had to pay our rent and buy food. We didn't need anything; we didn't eat much; we didn't live high; we didn't go out — we didn't have any desire to — it's weird! When I look back I can see why older people could really be envious of that, because they work hard and they work for their kids and here their kids go out and just goof off. And that's what we were doing, too. I got fired and she quit, and our unemployment helped out. We just dwindled our money. Then when we started running out of money and the poge ran out because we had exhausted our supply, we got to thinking, "Man, it's time we started to do something." This was at the time when a friend of mine came to visit and he had a Bible in his hand; it was such a shock to me. He started to say, "You've got to be saved and you've got to know Jesus." I thought, "Settle down, give your head a shake." My first impression was that he was stoned. Everyone was saying he's flipped out. I started talking to him and I could see he was sincere. He didn't know what he was into; you could see he was onto something different. It was different than what I was on, and I thought he was crazy anyway, and I was going to let him know he was crazy and I wasn't going to let him know I was interested. And that's when I started thinking and my wife started thinking. For the next couple of months all we did was rap with these people about God and about the

Bible and our religious upbringing. I was raised a Catholic, and I had fallen completely away from the church. I had a bit of faith in it, but nothing to speak of — I didn't go to church or worry about it. But my wife really got under conviction; she knew this was real, there's something to it, there's some power there, and she started to read that Bible and she was reading it every night. And I got indignant toward it, "Don't talk to me about it. I was raised a Catholic, I know it all. I don't need that kind of stuff. I'm doing fine without it." Meanwhile, I still kept getting stoned and all that, so it goes to show I didn't know what I was talking about; I didn't have a clue. I thought I did. They were talking about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. They kept saying, "You have to be born again." I said, "Born again, man, I was born once." Here these people were just like me and all of a sudden they are preaching God, saying you've got to change your ways, you can't live the way you're living, you've got to be born again. So I decided, "Well, I am going to ask Christ to come into my life and change my life. If He can change me from what I am now and make me better — because this is what His promise is, 'I will change you and I will make you anew and I will give you life more abundantly.'" I had a selfish reason, I thought, "Well, if He can give me a more abundant life and a better time than what I am having now, I'll give Him a try. I'll put my faith in Him." And I started, and then my life changed; I accepted Christ into my life and His holy spirit came into me — and I believe this. My wife and I were born again two years ago. And my whole family, my Mother, my two sisters and my brother, have become Christians since we did. It's been a wonderful experience.

ME: Tell me the step-by-step procedure back to reality.

DANNY: There was no step-by-step procedure at all — it was completely taken away. God had promised these things to me in the Bible, and He told me that I was a temple and that if He were to live inside of me, that I couldn't have a temple that had been defiled. And smoking marijuana defiled this temple. In other words, if I were to call myself a Christian and be stoned, people would look at me and they would hear me talking about God and they would say, "Look at him, he's no example. He's not like Christ." So I prayed to God, "Lord, I want to be an example of you, so I pray, Lord, that you will be with me." And the desire was gone. It wasn't that I quit, the desire was taken away from me. It wasn't my power, it was His power. He held true to His promise; He took it away. He took it away from my wife the very same way. There was no

withdrawal, nothing, no problem. And that's God — He did that.

ME: At anytime did you fear what you were doing to your nervous system, your brain or future children?

DANNY: Yes — this is really a subject with my wife. You see, she has had two premature babies. We had one at seven months; she had no trouble during her pregnancy and at seven months I had to take her to the hospital, and the baby lived for a couple of days, it was only two or three pounds. And the last one she miscarried at three months, the danger period. That was six months ago. During the time we were on drugs, I used to wonder if this is really hurting me, but I never really gave it too much thought, because I didn't care at that time. Then when I first became a Christian, I wondered if this had had any affect on us — I don't think it did. I think our lives now are in the hands of God. She is three months pregnant again, and our faith is in God and I am sure He will bring us through this time and then our family will be started.

ME: What was the whole misadventure like to you at the time and what are your thoughts in retrospect now?

DANNY: When I think of the time, it was just an irresponsible way of living; it was a selfish way of living, and an apathetic existence. It had its great and good moments, but sooner or later it's like all things in this world, the novelty or the excitement of it wears off because it's not the true answer to life. To be honest, to me the answer to life is putting your faith in something that is above man and has the power to give us what we are searching for, and that is the truth in life and the meaning of life. Happiness, which I thought I could find in drugs, God has provided for me; joy, which I thought I was getting in drugs, God has provided; peace, that I thought I was getting from drugs, God has provided, peace that surpasses understanding. The peace was the big thing on drugs, but the peace God gives you, you can't explain it. These are called fruits of the spirit. As a result of my new life, I am experiencing life abundantly.

ME: Now that your life has taken on form and purpose, how important is your future?

DANNY: My future is only important if it glorifies God in all things I do. I would like to be an affective witness to other people, so that they can see a change in my life, can see something in my life that is missing in their life. And it's not by my doing, but by God's doing, and they, too, can become a new person. I hope in the future that maybe someone will be helped by this column.