



What A Ride

By Alex Walt

PEOPLE walk past each other all the time, talking on their cell phones, eating a sandwich, or checking the time. What they don't know is that every person they pass has their own story. What were their struggles? Their Enlightenments? I have my own story, my own journey. I consider myself one of the lucky ones.

I started drinking when I was in eighth grade. Some girls I knew were doing it, and it was my ticket in. I instantly fell in love with the feeling. It enhanced the world I lived in; it gave me an escape from reality. I started high school with a running start—going downhill. Living outside of Berkeley, I developed an image of a “California chill dude”, smoking weed and drinking all of the time. I started dropping all the hobbies that I once enjoyed. I could not swim, play lacrosse or football and use drugs at the same time. I had to make a choice, and my choice was to get high.

The first time my parents caught me, I made an attempt to stop. After a couple days of going clean, I found that escaping reality was easier than dealing with what was in front of me. That was the first time I tried to stop, and it wouldn't be the last time.

After a long while of using alcohol and marijuana, I grew bored. I yearned for a new adventure. I found it in over-the-counter cough medicine. It put me in

a different world, just what I was looking for. I was stealing it from stores and buying it from dealers. I was doing anything I could to get loaded. Shortly thereafter, I was using ecstasy, mushrooms, and prescription pills; basically anything I could get my hands on. I was kicked out of my house the summer before my sophomore year. I spent every penny I had on drugs. I hurt myself running from the police, and had to sleep on an elementary school roof to stay warm. When my parents took me back, I promised to change.

My sophomore year was rough. I ventured into LSD as a drug of choice. I blacked out one night, had a concussion, and then went to the hospital with a .31 BAC level. My grades were heading downhill. My parents didn't trust me. My life was falling through the floor. I was suspended at school for drinking. Life seemed flawless to me though. I blamed my problems on people who tried to help me. I was addicted.

My life hit its lowest point when my own father watched me being held at gunpoint by the police. I lost control of myself while under the influence of LSD, and broke into my neighbor's house. I was served charges and a restraining order. I think that is where a higher power stepped in.

In a last attempt to save me from a path I was taking, my parents chose to send me to a wilderness program in Mon-

tana. Having no self-control, I ate all of my weeks' rations in a couple days and didn't eat for 2 1/2 days while hiking. I then entered into a sober living residential program, also in Montana. It flipped my life completely upside down. I tried to work around my problems for months, but nothing worked. I gave the middle finger to the world and asked why these things were happening to me.

Eventually, I came to a fork in the road. I had to make a choice whether to continue down the path I was on, or to change my ways. I considered my options for a long time. I looked at the lives of people who were on my road, then looked at the people who were sober. I made the right choice, life.

I have been sober from drugs now for over a year. My relationship with my family is in a renaissance. You know that kid your parents told you to stay away from? That was me. Now, I am a positive influence on my small town community of Thompson Falls, MT. I am raising the schools GPA, involved in sports, community service, and clubs at my school. My favorite thing to do is to try and help the kids that remind me of my past. I am involved with NA and I am working the 12 step program.

My parents made the right choice in sending me to Montana. It's intensely difficult to send your child away, but they acted in love, care, and concern for me. The place I am living in is very personal. It helps me realize my potential. It allows me to see the world in a new perspective.

What people should understand is that the world is not run by people who use drugs. Sobriety is so key to being successful at what you want to do. You need to find something you're passionate about, and do it. Love what you do. You only get one opportunity in this world, so make it count. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Alex Walt is a student at Thompson Falls High School in Thompson Falls, MT. Alert Magazine congratulates him for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage him in the pursuit of his academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.