

CELEBRATING POSITIVE CHOICES



# Listen

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GREGORY HINES AND

**BRANDON**

**HAMMOND**

FROM THE GREGORY HINES SHOW







# POINT

## PLAYING THE

"Don't sell yourself short,"  
said Coach Hansen

**C**oach Hansen pulls me into his office after practice and sits me down in the chair in front of his desk, the chair we all dread, the chair we call the hot seat. Was I in trouble? The hot seat is where you go when you're in trouble, like last week when Moody got kicked off the team because Coach smelled beer on his breath, or when Simms got bumped from playing point because, as Coach put it, "his mouth is fouler than a marathoner's sneakers."

You gotta love the guy. Or fear him. Right about now I'm fearing him. If I'm in trouble, I have no idea why. Coach must notice the look of worry on my face. He says, "Relax, you're not on the hot seat. I just want you to keep an eye on Greely over the holiday. Keep him out of trouble."

Matt Greely is one of the top forwards in the state, and just about everybody knows it, especially the college scouts. But he used to have a drinking problem. Coach has been able to keep him focused on the game and his studies while school is in session. But now with Christmas break coming he's worried

that Matt will slip into his old ways and his old friendships.

About a million things crowd into my brain at once. Like why me? I'm just the second-string point guard, not even considered for the lead role when Simms got bumped. I say, "Matt's problem is bigger than I can handle."

"Don't sell yourself short," says Coach Hansen. "If anyone can keep him clean, you can."

It's true; we are best buddies off the court. Still, I wonder—

"I want you to promise you'll be on him constantly. Hound him. Invite him to do stuff. Keep him out of trouble."

I'm not so sure I can have much influence over a guy six feet eight inches, 220 pounds, but because Coach is Coach—and I, after all, am not on the hot seat—I say OK. I'll try.

Later, at my locker, Matt throws a wadded towel at me and says, "So, the ole hot seat, eh? You still on the team?"

"Nah, he just wanted to tell me I'd be leading the show against Jefferson."

Matt snorts. He knows a lie when he hears

ILLUSTRATION: PERRY STEWART

B U G D E G T R I N E



one. "Not if they bring Simms out of retirement." He stuffs his gear in the locker and slams it shut. "Speaking of Simms, there's a party at his house tonight. Parents out of town; you know the drill. Want to go?"

Coach Hansen's words bounce around in my head. *Hound him. Keep him out of trouble.* "Let's do something else," I say quickly. But for a moment I can't think of anything, nothing that can compete with Simms and his parents being out of town. Yeah, I know the drill. Sorry to say, I know it too well. "Shoot some hoops at my house?" I finally say, knowing it's a lame alternative.

"Haven't you had enough of that today?" He gives me a grin. "Sharon's going to be there."

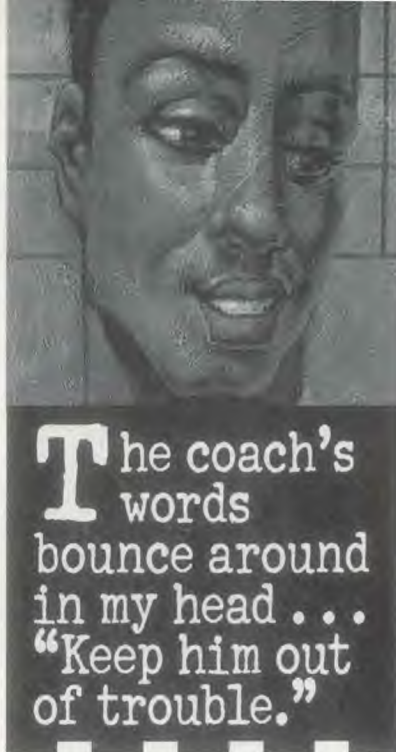
Uh-oh, my weak spot. I know I've lost this argument. I have a thing for Sharon Jameson. My heart is putty in her hands. Just the mention of her name makes my stomach do flips.

"What time did you say that party starts?" I had lost round one in the battle to keep Matt on the straight and narrow. And it wasn't even the first day of vacation yet.

The place is packed by the time we get there. On the way over I give Matt a good talking-to about keeping away from alcohol. He says he will, but it's one thing to make a promise alone in the car with me, quite another to be faced with the stuff sitting on ice in Simms's kitchen.

We're hardly there two minutes when one of the football guys tosses Matt a beer from across the room. I intercept it and toss it back, thinking I missed my calling. I should have been a wide receiver. I realize coming here is a big mistake. If temptation is a problem, you don't put yourself in a position to be tempted. Sound advice. Too bad I didn't take it.

"Let's get out of here,"



I whisper to Matt.

"Relax, I'm staying. Why don't you go find Sharon?" Matt turns away from me and weaves his way through the crowd.

OK, plan A is a flop. How about plan B? Don't have one. OK, improvise; wing it. Meantime, I may as well look for Sharon. I follow Matt's invisible path through the crowd. The smell of alcohol's heavy in the air, and I know I have to get Matt out of here if I'm to honor Coach Hansen's request.

I weave my way through the crowd, doing a simultaneous search for Matt and Sharon. Good thing I have two eyeballs. I start to fear the worst when I don't see Matt anywhere, but my stomachache disappears when I don't find Sharon, either. I find my way to the kitchen and open the fridge to get a soda. Another arm reaches in beside me. I stop. I turn. Two brown eyes meet mine. A smile.

It's Sharon Jameson in the flesh! A blush starts at the base of my neck and floods my face. I hate that, but I can't do anything to stop it.

"Hi," she says.

"Hi, Sharon. Have you seen Matt?"

"No."

Silence. I stare at the ceiling, the walls, my shoes.

The conversation is dead in the water. She tries to revive it.

"I didn't think you went to these kind of things. Not the partying type, I mean."

"I'm chaperoning Matt Greely. You know, hot basketball property."

This gets a laugh from her, and suddenly the conversation flows. It's easy. Here I am with Sharon Jameson, and she's smiling and having a good time. With me! In the back of my mind, however, I think of Matt. Where is he?

We look out the window at the Ping-Pong table in the backyard. "Play you a game of Ping-Pong, Sharon."

"You're on."

Then it comes to me. An idea to keep Matt from getting in over his head. I rush outside and grab two Ping-Pong paddles. Coming back with them, I say to Sharon, "Be right back. I have to make an announcement."

I go into the living room and stand on the coffee table, waving the paddles. "Attention! Ping-Pong tournament is starting immediately on the back patio. All are welcome." I scan the crowd and spot Matt over to one side, no beer in his hand, but I know he's on the verge. I gesture toward the kitchen. He meets me there.

"I have to admit, not a bad idea," he says to me. "Play you first game?"

I shake my head and smile at Sharon. "You can play the winner, Matt." Then Sharon and I go outside and play a game, the first in a long evening of Ping-Pong.

Matt stayed away from alcohol that night . . . and you should have seen him at the Jefferson game! ■

ILLUSTRATION: PERRY STEWART





# YO! JENNY

Listen up, teens. Say Hi to Jennifer Acklam, a Miss Texas Coed and America's Homecoming Queen. Jenny wants to hear from you. Send your letters to us at **LISTEN** magazine, P.O. Box 859, Hagerstown, MD 21741, and we'll pass them on to her for the column.

I am scared because my friend Angela is dating someone I know is an abuser. She comes to school with bruises on her—and she cries a lot. She won't tell anyone what is making her cry, but I am sure it's because of this guy she is seeing.

Many people who are abused are too scared to tell someone who could really help them. They think that if anyone finds out, their abuser will get really mad and hurt them even worse. This presents a vicious cycle. Someone (a close friend, a relative, or any trusted person) has to step in and come to the aid of the abused person! Try to talk to Angela

about her boyfriend and their relationship in a gentle, nonaccusing way. Admitting that she is being abused will not be easy for her. Once Angela admits to the fact that she is being mistreated, she must be convinced that this treatment will not automatically stop or even improve. An abuser continues to abuse until he admits his problem and wants to change! If Angela absolutely will not open up to you about her boyfriend getting rough with her, then you will need to seek the help of a school counselor, clergy, or a favorite teacher or relative of Angela's. This situation definitely requires *urgent attention*.

My friend's cousin and her boyfriend smoke. I'm worried that my friend will try to act cool and smoke too. My friend said not to tell anyone this. I'm concerned because my grandpa died of lung cancer because he smoked.

Your concern is very justified. Friends who smoke usually influence nonsmokers to pick up this nasty habit. I don't think you probably need "to tell anyone" in particular at this time. The important thing is that you talk very openly and honestly with your friend about your concerns regarding *her* not smoking. Explain to her that you are worried about her health and the possibility of her being pushed into trying cigarettes. Remind her of the health problems your grandfather suffered because of smoking. Your positive and health-conscious influence will greatly counterbalance the possible "pull" of your friend's cousin and boyfriend toward any unhealthy, negative habits.

I love my mom and dad. They are the best parents in the world. I wish they didn't smoke. We just studied about the dangers of tobacco and nicotine in health class, and I'm scared my parents are going to get cancer or have a heart attack and die. How can I get them to listen to me and stop smoking?

Hooray for you! Your parents are so lucky that you love them so much—and are concerned about their health. A good way to start the conversation about their smoking would be to tell them about the health unit you just studied. Share with them all the facts you are learning about the dangers of smoking. Then tell them how much it scares you to even think about either one of them getting some horrible disease or dying. Just remember to keep telling them how much you love them and want them to quit this harmful habit. I'm sure they will start to think differently about their smoking when they realize how much it is bothering you. Every day the news is filled with more and more statistics about the dangers of cigarettes. The bottom line is—cigarettes are killers that travel in packs!

My boyfriend and I have been dating for about six months, and everything is cool between us—except for one thing. My best friend and my boyfriend are getting closer and closer. It used

to be that they would just say hi to each other in the hall and talk to each other only when I was around. Now my girlfriend sits with him at lunch (I have a different lunch period), and she even calls him at night "just to talk." I don't want to sound jealous, but I'm starting to wonder about their chummy "friendship." Should I be worried?

"Worry" is like a rocking chair—it gives you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere. This situation may be totally harmless—and be a complete "nothing." On the other hand, if it disturbs you, you have every right to put your mind at ease by talking to each of them about your feelings. If the situation keeps on even after talking with each of them, maybe it's time to evaluate the boyfriend-girlfriend relationship. If you feel you are being put on the back burner and are uncomfortable, then it's probably time to stop being an "item"—and just chill the boyfriend-girlfriend relationship for a while. However, don't be too quick to move in this direction if you really like this guy. Remember, you can save yourself lots of hard falls by not jumping to conclusions!

We had a drug bust at school the other day, and this guy Danny got caught with drugs in his locker. Danny hates me and has been telling people he's going to get me in trouble too by saying the drugs were mine. I don't do drugs, and I know I'm completely innocent. But I'm scared of Danny because he's a big liar, and he gets people in trouble all the time with his lies. What should I do?

I'm so glad to hear you are *not* into drugs! Stay on that path! I can understand your concern about the potential problems Danny may try to cause you. I think the issue needs to be brought to the attention of a school administrator (principal, counselor, or trusted teacher). Don't sit back and hope that Danny doesn't cause trouble. Waiting for the first sign of trouble could actually multiply your problems down the road. Instead, I would suggest that you go right to the school administration and tell them exactly what you've heard Danny is planning to do. Then if and when Danny does try to get you in trouble, the school will already have been forewarned and will have already heard your side (the truth) of the matter. ■



**I**t's 8:10 a.m. A uniformed control officer at Sheridan Correctional Center has just popped the door to C-25 D-Hall so I can get in for my 8:15 class. As I step into the hall, the door slams shut behind me. I'm locked in. I take a deep breath. In front of me are the 70 blue-clad inmates who will be in my class.

As I make my way through the crowd, I feel their eyes on me. I wipe my face of all expression. I walk with purpose. After what seems like a year, I reach the area of the day room where the class will be held. The inmates assemble, some sit in chairs, some slouch against the walls, and others sprawl on the floor. It's time to begin.

Clutching a manila file folder to my chest, I pace back and forth in front of the first row of chairs.

"Good morning. This class is about recovery from alcohol and drug addiction. My name is Chris. I'm a recovering alcoholic. If you have any questions about my life or my recovery, or about Alcoholics Anonymous, you may ask them. Today we'll be talking about tools of recovery."

"Do you work here?" This from an inmate in the front row, whose arms are bigger than his thighs.

I stop pacing, feeling like a deer caught in the glare of headlights. "Yes, I do. I work on the hill," I say, referring to the administration building, which lies outside the double rows of chain-link fencing topped with razor wire.

"You married?" calls out a tall, thin Hispanic man in the back. The crowd hoots. Inmates punch and shove at each other. I wait for them to settle.

"Not anymore," I answer, wondering if inviting them to ask questions was such a good idea.

# PAYING THE PRICE

Why am I standing here in front of these inmates?

I resume pacing. *What am I doing here? Breathe. Focus. God, please help me.*

"OK. Let me ask you some questions. How many of you have a problem with alcohol or drugs?"

Ten of the 70 hands go up.

"Only 10?"

A snicker runs through the crowd.

"All right. How many of you are here on drug-related cases?"

Nearly all hands go up.

"So, you don't think being here on a drug case constitutes having a problem with drugs or alcohol?"

They howl with laughter.

Again I am startled into immobility. I take a moment to study them more closely. Some of them look 15 years old. I know they can't be. They must be at least 18 to be incarcerated in an adult facility. But a good half of this class is obviously under 25.

As the laughter dies, a young African-American in the middle row of chairs stands up. "I'm here on a drug case, but I don't do drugs. I'm a dealer. It's the family business. It's all I know. And I make good money at it, too."

He sits. Others mumble

agreement, and I hear the word "money" several times.

I wonder what good the money is when they're all in prison. Was it worth it? I decide to ask.

"The state tells you how to dress, when and what you will eat, where you will live. You can't take a shower or go to the bathroom in complete privacy. Your mail is censored. Was it worth it?"

"Yeah, it was worth it," says a small, stocky White inmate who looks to be all of 20. "I got two years on a possession case. I'll do one. A year is no big deal. I won't get caught next time."

"So you plan to use again?"

"Yeah, so what? I'm not hurting anybody."

I remember that lie from my own drinking and drug-using days. "Who else?"

A young man rises from the front row of chairs. "I've been incarcerated off and on since I was 18 years old. At first I thought like that guy who only caught two years. *I'll do a year*, I thought. *No big deal*. So I went out and got into drugs again. I got caught again. Three years. Then again. This time I got five years. You think you won't get caught again? Not one of us here thought we'd get caught, but here we are."

A young African-American gets up from the floor. "I chose drugs over my family. My family doesn't want anything to do with me now. My mom says I can't come home anymore. I lost my family."

My heart hurts. I thank God for my sobriety and for its keeping me on the outside of places like this. At the same time I realize that these people are like me. We have addiction in common.

An older inmate speaks up from the back corner. "Drugs take away everything. I lost my job, my family, my self-respect, my freedom. But it isn't a question of

BY CHRISTI A. REYNOLDS

LISTEN/DECEMBER 1998



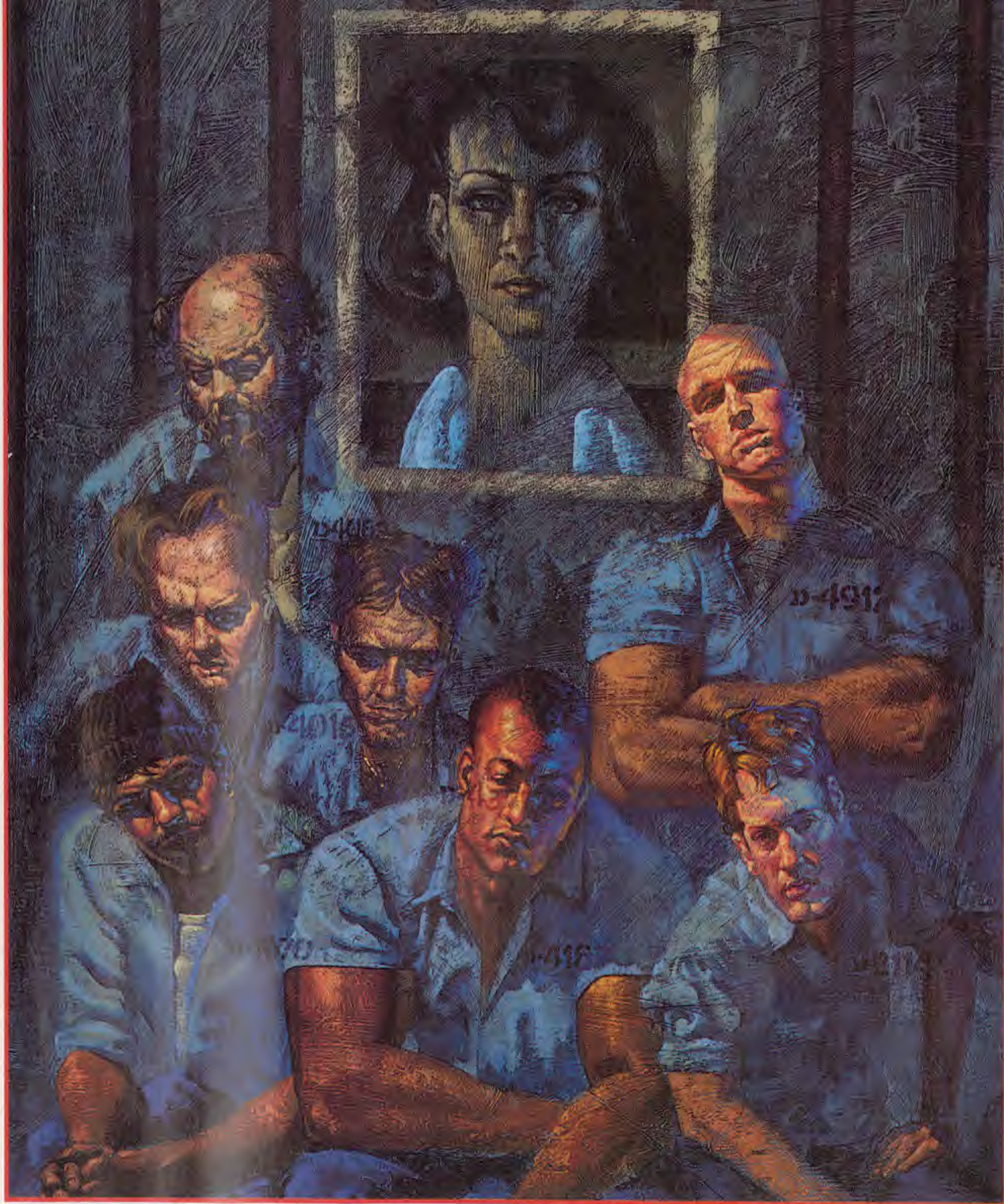


ILLUSTRATION: PERRY STEWART

• *Someone says: "Drugs take away everything. I lost my job, my family, my self-respect, my freedom . . ."*

worth. We all know it isn't worth it. See, once the drug gets hold of you, it hangs on hard. Once the drug has you, it doesn't ever let go. You've got to stay away from it. If you don't, it will kill you."

There's silence while we all digest this.

I check my watch. It's 10:05

already! "OK. We're out of time. You're dismissed until 10:15. I'll see you next week."

Inmates spread like an oil slick over the floor of the day room. I remind myself to breathe as once again I pass through the crowd, this time on my way out. A few of the guys say goodbye. Others stare

at me; most ignore me. I wave to get the attention of the control officer. He pops the door to D-Hall. I step out. The door slams shut behind me. I take a deep breath, let it out slowly, and continue out of the building. I am grateful for my freedom, my sobriety, and my life. ▀



# CHOICES

by Kay D. Rizzo

## COOL

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Olympic mountain bike champion Paola Pezzo received a six-month ban from competition for drug use. She was later cleared of the charges. Australian sprinter Dean

Capobianco tested positive for steroids. He faces a four-year ban if found guilty. Italian high jumper Antonella Bevilacqua twice in one month tested positive for the banned stimulant ephedrine.

Canadian track star Ben Johnson flew past his competitors in the 100-meter run at the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, Korea. But 72 hours later, the gold medal for his record-breaking time of 9.79 was rescinded after traces of the drug stanozolol were detected in his urine. At the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain, athletes from Germany, the United States, China, Britain, and the former Soviet Union were turned away because of drug use.

Is it cool to use energy enhancers in order to outperform your opponents? Is it fair? You might say, Drugs or no drugs, the players have earned their places on the Olympic team, right? Why the big deal? After all, isn't winning what's important? **Answer the following questions and discover what you would advise in the following scenarios.**

1. You and your best friend are



What kind of win is it when you need illegal drugs to enhance performance?

both in contention for the Olympic running team. Your times have been pretty much the same for years. Suddenly your friend begins running like a person possessed, crossing the finish line yards ahead of everyone else. You ask your friend what has caused the sudden increase of speed. Your friend admits to using the steroid stanozolol. "You should try it," he says. "It's a miracle drug. I can get you some." What do you tell your friend?

2. Your coach (who is also your friend's coach), a person you like and admire greatly, corners you after practice and asks you if you know whether or not your friend is taking steroids. What do you say?

3. When you return to the gym the next day, you find a packet of capsules in your locker. You suspect that it contains Anadrol, an anabolic steroid. And you suspect it was put there by your friend. What do you do?

4. Suddenly you sense the coach is standing behind you. He sees what you have, and asks you what it is you're holding in your hand, whether you've been using, and if so, where you got it.

Tough situation, huh? But very real. If your answer to **number 1** was that you'd remind your friend of the dangers of steroid use and insist he get help, you get a gold medal. However, if you'd keep his admission secret, you lose him as a friend. And if you'd try a few capsules or an injection yourself, you *might* nail a win or two on the field, but you might also nail the lid on your own coffin.

**Number 2** calls for you to demonstrate your loyalty to your friend, your coach, and your sport. If your loyalty is toward your best bud instead of your coach and your sport, everyone loses. A friend who draws on your friendship to keep a damaging secret is thinking of himself or herself and not you or your friendship.



**Number 3:** If you said toss the pills down the toilet, you're in the running for a medal. Go for gold—convince your friend to get help.

**Number 4:** If you replied honestly to questions 1 and 2, then told the coach you're not sure where the pills came from, but you'll get back to him, you're on the winner's block. Do follow through. Confront your friend and

**Y**ou owe it to the sport you love and to all those who “run cool” to keep clean of drugs.

convince him to turn himself in to the coach. The coach has other options than to ban your friend from the sport, you know. Is any gold medal worth the loss of a friend?

You owe it to the sport you love and to all of those who choose to “run cool” to keep it clean of drugs. What kind of a win is it if you need dangerous illegal drugs to enhance your performance? ▀





**W**ITHOUT WARNING, JUNE PULLED OUT A PACK OF VIRGINIA SLIMS AND OFFERED SALLY ONE, AS IF IT WERE NOTHING...



**REALITY CHECK:**

TEENS WHO SMOKE ARE  
BEGINNING A HABIT THAT  
WILL, IN THE LONG RUN,  
KILL 1 OUT OF 3  
OF THEM!

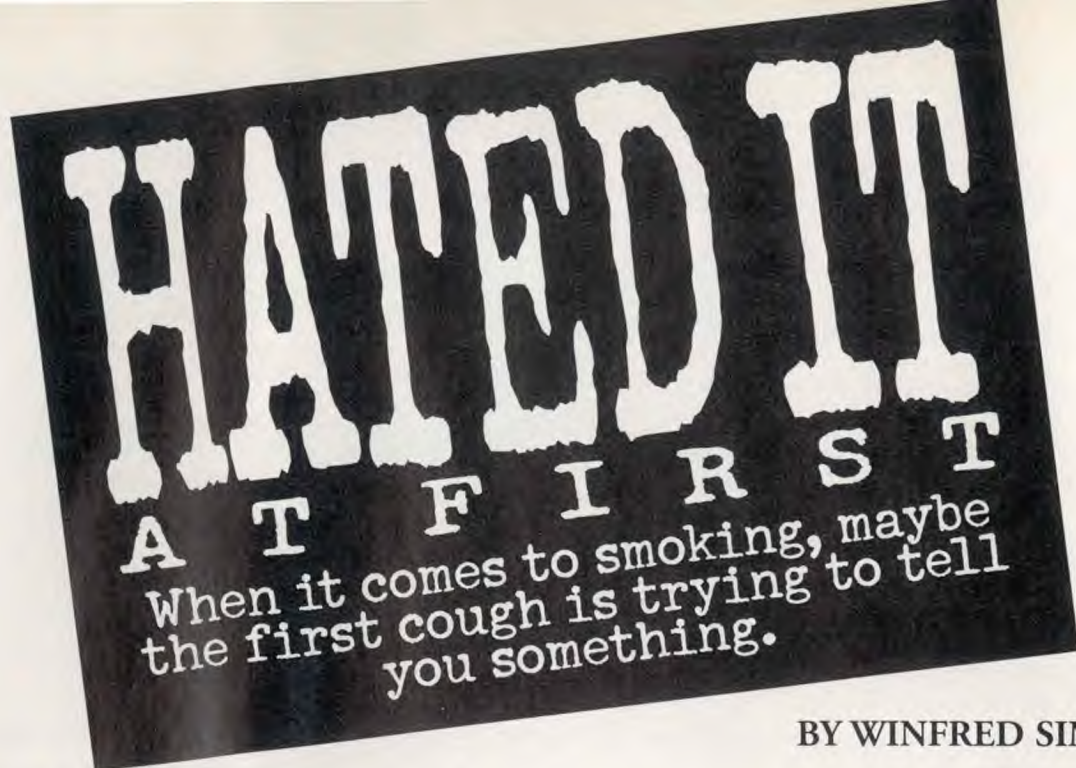


*The End?*



**S**MOKING IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF PREVENTABLE DEATH IN THE U.S. SMOKING IS RELATED TO 3 MILLION DEATHS WORLDWIDE EACH YEAR. WHO REALLY WANTS TO START SMOKING?





BY WINFRED SIMNEL

**S**ally was 13 years old when she smoked her first cigarette. She was sitting on the curb in front of the apartment building of her best friend, June, waiting for the school bus, which was late. Without warning, June pulled out a pack of Virginia Slims and offered Sally one, as if it were nothing.

"Thanks," Sally said a little nervously. She took the cigarette in her mouth and lit it. As she gagged on the smoke, she felt embarrassed.

"Hey," said June, who smiled as she blew smoke rings, "it takes a bit of getting used to, but once you do, you'll really like it."

"You really think so?" said Sally, making a funny face.

"I know so," answered June, "because the same thing happened to me. Hated it at first. But before long you like it so much you can't wait for your next smoke."

At first Sally didn't see how. She hated the taste, and by the time the school bus came she hadn't even finished it, and she felt sick. As she sat in the seat, she purposely moved near the window because she thought she was

going to throw up.

But, interestingly enough, June was right; the more Sally smoked, the more she liked it. In fact, she liked it a lot, so much so that within a year Sally was smoking a pack a day.

Unfortunately, young Sally, though only 13, isn't alone. Every month almost 90,000 kids, many of them just like Sally, light up their first cigarette. Most, like her, probably gagged and got sick on their first one too. Maybe their bodies were trying to tell them something. Actually, there is no maybe about it. Considering what tobacco smoke does to human beings, there's no question that gagging and those coughs are the body telling a smoker that these chemicals he or she is putting into it are bad news.

Too bad, though, that thousands of kids every day don't listen to what their bodies are saying, and they start a habit that in the long run will kill one out of three of them.

Along the side of a pack of cigarettes are warnings such as: "Caution: cigarette smoking may be hazardous to your health." *May* be hazardous to your health? That's like saying, "Caution, living

in a war zone may be hazardous to your health," or "Caution, dousing yourself in gasoline and playing with matches at the same time may be dangerous to your health."

With the exception of the "scientists" who work directly for the tobacco industry, medical research is unanimous in its warning of the dangers of smoking. Study after study for more than 40 years has proved that smoking cigarettes can and often does destroy your health.

It shouldn't be surprising, actually. After all, if you put poison in your body, it will hurt you. That's what makes it poison; if it didn't hurt you, it wouldn't be poison.

And tobacco smoke is, beyond question, poison. In fact, it is literally hundreds of poisons, all rolled into one simple cigarette.

A poison such as carbon monoxide (same as in car exhaust fumes) can, among other things, destroy coronary arteries and open the way for degenerative disease. Formaldehyde (the stuff they use to preserve things in jars) paralyzes the cilia, meaning that the lungs are unable to clean out the tar that builds up from smoking.



Benzoapyrene gradually attacks the DNA in cells, making them much more susceptible to cancer—and these types of cancers are responsible for fully one third of all the cancer deaths in the United States. And nitrogen oxide destroys both the lungs and the heart.

Other toxic and cancer-causing substances that a smoker places in his or her body with each puff are: polonium, tar, toluidine, alkylcatechol, acetaldehyde, ammonia, nitrosamine, indenopyrene, and catechol. If they don't exactly sound healthy, they aren't.

Smoking kills in a number of ways, some more quickly than others. Those who die from heart attacks, for which the risk is greatly increased by smoking, die quicker than those who gasp and sputter (usually lugging an oxygen tank around with them on a little cart) from emphysema. Then there's cancer, which in smokers strikes the lungs, mouth, bladder, and throat in much greater numbers than in nonsmokers.

One form of cancer caused by smoking is oral cavity cancer, with which a smoker (or someone who chews tobacco) develops a small white tobacco patch called a leukoplakia, a whitish layer of tissue inside the mouth. Though they're often benign, every year thousands of these patches turn into cancers that, if not treated, will kill the patient. Treatment includes surgery that can leave people with severely deformed faces (it's real hard to kiss someone with half your lips gone). Smokers can also develop something called "hairy tongue," a brown furlike coating composed of abnormally thickened and elongated projections (papillae) that rest on the top of the tongue. Yuck!

"More than 30,000 persons in the United States are diagnosed and treated for oral cancer each year," writes Dr. Arden Christen,

## SECONDHAND SMOKE:

**One study showed women married to smokers had double the chance of dying from cancer than those married to nonsmokers.**

of the Indiana University School of Dentistry. "Virtually all of these patients use tobacco in some form."

No wonder then that cigarettes cause one death in six in the United States. In an average year more than 400,000 people die directly from smoking. Worldwide 3 million die every year (that's one fatality every 10 seconds), all of which can be directly related to tobacco.

"Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in this country," writes David Nyhan, "causing one fifth of all heart-related deaths. Cancer deaths alone run more than 150,000 annually. Eighty-five percent of lung cancer deaths come from smoking."

One recent study in California's Silicon Valley showed that one in five residents will die from tobacco-related causes. That's 20 percent of the population killing themselves slowly with tobacco.

"It's like going to the cemetery and counting off every fifth gravestone, and then saying, 'That person wouldn't have been here except for tobacco,'" says George Kaplan, chief of the state's human population laboratory.

No wonder too that smoking costs the U.S. health-care system an estimated \$100 million per

year. A smoker requires \$6,000 more per lifetime in medical treatment than a nonsmoker, and also loses six and a half more days of work each year than nonsmokers.

Then there's another whole aspect of smoking that just drives the tobacco kings nuts. That is the issue of secondhand smoke, smoke that nonsmokers have to inhale because of smokers. For years the argument has been "Well, if people want to smoke and take risks, that's their choice. They're not hurting anyone else." However questionable that argument was in the past, now with more and more studies showing the dangers of secondhand smoke to others, it rings more hollow than ever.

Sidestream smoke, the smoke from the lighted end of the cigarette that smokers don't smoke but those in the area around them do merely by breathing, has been shown to contain even higher concentrations of some of the noxious chemicals the smoker inhales. It has twice as much tar and nicotine and three to four times as much benzoapyrene, all known as cancer-causing agents. One study in Japan showed that women married to smokers had a greater chance of dying from cancer than those married to nonsmokers. "The mortality ratio for wives of husbands who smoked more than 20 cigarettes per day more than doubled that of women married to nonsmokers."

Of course, as Sally smoked her first cigarette, she didn't know all of these things. And by the time she was old enough to start understanding them, she found herself severely addicted.

If only she had listened to her first cough—to what it was trying to tell her. No doubt, if she doesn't quit smoking, it won't be her last cough, either. And sadly, as with thousands of others each year, once she finally starts listening, it may well be too late. ■



By Cynthia Vespia

# LIVING IN TURMOIL

A P E R S O N A L E X P E R I E N C E

**A**s far back as I can remember there has always been the influence of alcohol and drugs around me. For reasons I still don't understand, my mother became an alcoholic. Over the years her alcoholism spread like a wildfire over my older brother and sisters. Not able to cope with the turmoil in our family, six of my siblings turned their backs on the dysfunction and proceeded to indulge in alcohol binges and even illegal drug use.

I was about 8 years old when I finally realized not why but how they were destroying themselves. At the time I would just hide in my room and ignore the outside world, hoping it would get better by itself. Five years later it only got worse.

That was when Cathy, my 26-year-old sister, died, and my mother tried to cope with the loss by drinking even more, by being totally oblivious to anything. Instead of learning from her mistakes, my siblings continued down their own destructive paths.

Cathy's death left me dumbfounded. I was now 15, and my whole world had drastically changed. A great hole was in my heart, and I felt hollow inside. And heartwrenching, gut-twisting pain had entered my precious little world. How was I supposed to be able to deal with such a tragedy at my age? I decided that the only thing I could do was to ignore this too.

Four years went by with things getting progressively worse. My mother was rarely sober anymore, and it seemed as though the entire

family was discreetly dismissing the whole issue of my sister's death, when we should've been airing out our feelings on it. Then, when we thought nothing could ever get worse, my oldest brother, Charlie, was murdered. The first thing my mother did when she heard the news was to rush out and buy a large bottle of vodka. She was determined to drown this sorrow too. I didn't know what to do.

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*I decided to choose inner strength. My focus became to better myself, to make a life for myself I could be proud of.*

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Sure, I had other everyday kinds of problems, such as trying to fit in at school, having a childhood, and just growing up in general. But here were two of the most devastating losses in my life stacked against me almost back to back, something no one should have to go through—and all before I even turned 18. You can imagine what something like that could do to a person.

Sure, I could've taken a quick way out, dropped out of school, gotten into drugs and alcohol, and gotten into trouble, but I didn't. I screamed; I cried; I cursed; but I got through it all. I persevered. There was pain, pressure, grief, and depression, but there was never ever temptation. The reason was that I was "fortunate" enough to see firsthand what alcohol and drugs do

to you.

They don't help a bad situation; they make it worse. My brother and my sisters before me chose that path. I decided to choose inner strength. My focus became to better myself, to make a life for myself that I could be proud of. I selected a hobby that I really enjoyed, writing, and I dove into it with 100 percent effort. I focused all my energy, good or bad, into my writing, and that made me happy. It gave me a purpose.

The grief and the loss will always be a part of me, but I made a decision to live with it. I decided that even though my brother and sister have lost their lives, that is no reason for me to give up on mine.

No matter what obstacle you have in front of you in your life, no matter how hard it seems to carry on, never give up. Never give up hope and never give up on yourself. Hold on one day at a time, and it'll go your way.

It's been two years since my brother Charlie's death, and even though it was a tragic loss, in a way it woke up my family. My sisters are no longer addicts. My mother has cut down on her drinking, and we are all a lot closer now.

I am now 19 years old, and I'm on my way to a life of fulfillment. To this day I remain drug- and alcohol-free, and I'm proud of it. I've learned that time *does* heal all wounds, and life *does* go on.

If you can find strength within yourself to reject the bad and focus on the good, you can make it. If you believe in yourself, there's always a positive solution to find, so have faith. ■



# A SECOND-CHANCE PROGRAM FOR TEENS

BY JEAN ANN WILLIAMS

**How can young people be held accountable for unlawful actions and not gain a criminal record? Officer Richard Checansky's Arroyo Grande program has an answer.**

**H**ow can young people be held accountable for unlawful actions and not gain a criminal record? One way is the Arroyo Grande Police Department's Community Juvenile Diversion Program. Officer Richard Checansky, who started this community-wide project in July 1995, works with a team that includes school resource officer Jim Williams and the high school supervisor of custodians, Dan Zickuhr.

Noting the local juvenile hall's overflowing capacity, and observing that often young people were not held accountable or being rehabilitated, Officer Checansky contacted 50 agencies and reviewed their programs, gleaned what he preferred from each, and created something unique.

Youth arrested for the first time

can be referred to the Diversion Program. Officer Checansky also receives phone calls from parents asking for help.

A typical scenario begins when Officer Jim makes an arrest at the high school and recommends the student to the Diversion Program. Officer Checansky reviews the report to decide if the youth meets the criteria for the program. If so, he schedules the student to attend a voluntary panel of three to five

**P**rior to this program students might wait a year before being punished and spend the rest of their lives with a record.

community representatives who live, work, or go to school in Arroyo Grande.

During the hearing, students and their parents are informed that the program is voluntary. It's important that the students themselves admit to their involvement in the crime. The panel refers them on to juvenile court if it believes they're innocent.

The panel members strive to get a feel for the whole person to decide how best to rehabilitate them. They question the student to see what they enjoy in life and why they committed the crime. The number and type of requirements the panel assigns to the student are limited only by their imagination. Commonly required in this four-month program are 500-word essays, family counseling, and community service work.

Supervisor Dan Zickuhr volunteers his time overseeing and appointing work for students having community service. Officer Jim assigns the students to Supervisor Dan; then the student and Dan draw up a contract agreement for campus cleanup. After school each student works a few hours each day until he/she has completed 30 to 40 hours of community service.

Officer Jim summed it up well: "Officer Checansky's Community Juvenile Diversion Program has a high success rate. Within two weeks after the student enters the program, he or she attends the hearing and begins to pay back the community."

Prior to this program students might wait a year before being punished and then spend the rest of their lives with a criminal record. This is one of the first juvenile programs that holds students accountable for their actions without creating a criminal record. ▀



The Community  
Juvenile  
Diversion  
Program has a  
high success  
rate . . .

"Within two  
weeks after the  
student enters  
the program, he  
or she attends  
the hearing and  
begins to pay  
back the  
community."

- Officer Jim Williams



• Pictured below are program overseers Dan Zickuhr (left), Officer Richard Checansky, and Officer Jim Williams. At left: Program administrators pose with student supporters. The actual students who have been through the program cannot be photographed.



## Listen in Bermuda

**P**roudly displaying their copies of *Listen* magazine are students at the Bermuda Institute Secondary School in sunny Bermuda. They and many of their classmates regularly use *Listen* magazine and enjoy reading about what other teens are doing Stateside.

These Bermuda teens were particularly happy to be associated with *Listen* magazine because they had just returned from a "Walk Around the World" fund-raiser. The walk brought out hundreds of young people in Bermuda as a public statement of support for

drug-free living. Some of the monies raised were designated to help pay for *Listen* magazine for public high schools on the Island of Bermuda. Congratulations to our Bermuda teens for supporting *Listen* and drug-free living in a big way.

• Bermuda teens show their support for *Listen* magazine and take a stand for drug-free living.





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Brandon





Brandon Hammond from *The Gregory Hines Show*  
**Follow Your Heart**

ARTICLE BY KIMBERLY CHENEY

**B**randon Hammond is one easy-to-talk-to star. So down-to-earth you'd never guess he's starred in such movies as *Soul Food*, *Mars Attacks*, *The Fan*, *Waiting to Exhale*, and *Lorenzo's Oil*. Nor does he seem like he's overawed at working with stars such as Vanessa L. Williams, Robert De Niro, and Whitney Houston. And he's calm about his recurring role on *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*, guest-starring roles in *Coach*, *Hangin' With Mr. Cooper*, and *Dave's World*. He's even pretty matter-of-fact about his

costarring role on *The Gregory Hines Show*.

And on top of that, *TV Guide* recently selected Brandon as "the best child performer of the year" (1997) and picked *The Gregory Hines Show* as "one of 1997's top 10 best shows of the year."

So how does Brandon keep his act together? To find out, *Listen* interviewed the young star recently in Los Angeles.

*Listen*: So how does it feel to be selected by  
(continued on page 28)

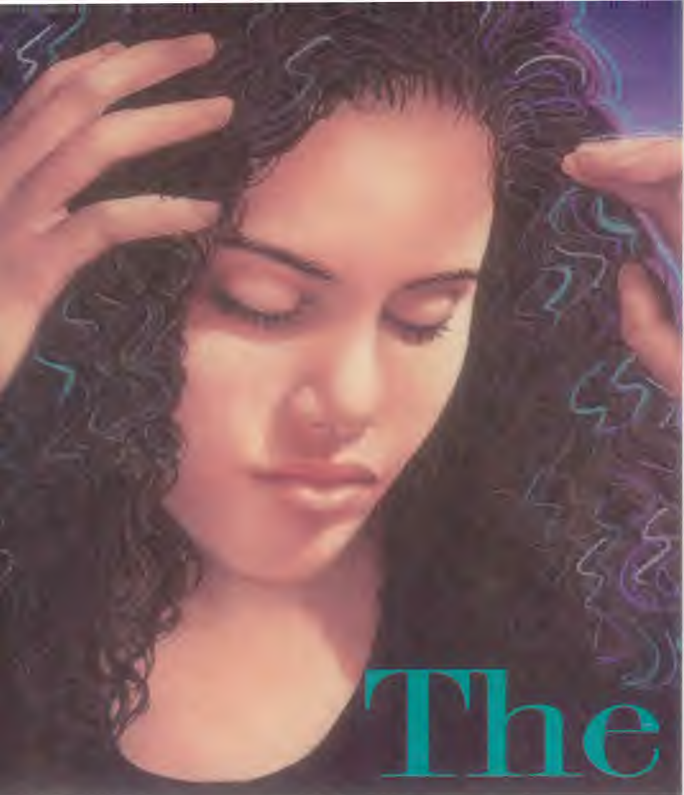
- Brandon plays Gregory Hines' son on their well-received weekly CBS program. Hines plays a hardworking widower raising a son on his own.



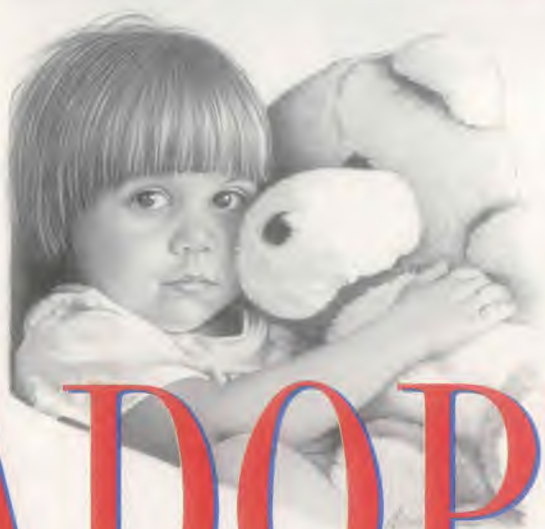
PHOTOS: © CBS

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DIANE GOLDBERG



# ADOPTION OPTION



Being pregnant when you are young, unmarried,  
and not through school is a terrible crisis.



**Actually, a young woman who, out of love for her child and respect for human life, makes a mature, unselfish choice deserves our respect.**

**B**eing pregnant when you are young, unmarried, and not through school is a terrible crisis. It could well be the *worst* thing that could happen to a young woman.

Right up front, let's state one basic fact: abstinence is the only sure way to avoid a crisis pregnancy. No ifs, ands, or buts about it, the only *safe sex* is *married sex*. Tragically, some girls fall prey to peer pressure, fear of losing their boyfriends, or media hype that says, "It's OK; it's no big deal."

Sex is a very big deal. There are a thousand reasons to respect the power of sexual intimacy and wait until you are married before engaging in sexual activity. Loss of self-respect, disease, emotional distress, and pregnancy are just the tip of the iceberg that threatens those who disregard the "rules."

Unfortunately everyone does not wait for marriage. Sometimes girls get pregnant when they are unwed and ill-prepared. Young people need to know

the *truth* about their choices, not the talk on the street or the lightweight information on talk shows. Young women can make the mistake of trying to parent before they themselves are grown up, because they believe the plague of misinformation about parenting and babies.

The word on the street is "If you are woman enough to lie down and make it, you're woman enough to raise it." Mark a big "false" by that one! You can become pregnant as young as 12. However, you cannot rent an apartment until you are 18 and have a steady income. You can't hold most jobs without a high school diploma. And minimum wage just won't support a baby today, if it ever did.

*Two people are required to conceive a child.* Unless those two people are able to marry and parent, they are cheating the baby of what he/she needs most: two parents.

Parenting is adult business: the ability to get pregnant *does not* mean you are an adult.

The newspapers are full of stories about movie stars

**Sex is a very big deal.**

**There are thousands of reasons to respect the power of sexual intimacy and wait...**



and musicians who have babies without being married. It makes it seem like a cool thing to do. After all, babies *are* adorable. If you think it is cool, try this exercise: figure out the cost of disposable diapers, formula, clothes, day care, doctor visits, and incidentals for even one month. After you do that, figure out what kind of after-school job you could get to pay for these things plus the day-care expense for your time in school and work. Pretty scary, isn't it?

Many young girls believe that "my baby will belong entirely to me and love me." Cute as they are, babies don't give much back at first. Imagine your life with no sleep, no free time, and no spending money. That's only the grim beginning. Your friends will have exciting things to do, and a baby will be a burden to you. It might be very hard to find a new boyfriend if you have a baby. As much as you might want to go to college, it will be hard to study with a sick child or impossible to go to the library without paying a baby-sitter. And just as you are becoming your own person and growing apart from your parents, so a baby will also grow up.

However, the *worst* horror show on the street is the false belief that if you love your baby you will not consider placing him/her with an adoptive family. Some people look down on a teen

**W**hat does love mean?

It means wanting the best for someone, wanting their potential to be fulfilled.

who releases a baby for adoption. Actually, a young woman who, out of love for her child and respect for human life, makes a mature, completely unselfish choice deserves our respect.

When I was the therapist for a group of pregnant teens, one young girl said, "I'm afraid I don't love my baby enough to give her away." This statement has haunted me because it is painfully true. Releasing a baby for adoption is painful. However, raising a baby when you are young, unmarried, and under educated is difficult at best and cruel at worst.

What does love mean? It means wanting the best for someone, wanting their needs to be met and their potential to be fulfilled. Can a 14-year-old, a 16-year-old, or even an 18-year-old alone give a baby constant nurturing, food, clothing, safety, and educational opportunities? Is it possible for one teenager to give a child the support of two parents?

Usually when I bring up these issues, someone challenges me by assuming I am talking only about the ability to buy name-brand shoes or CDs for the child. I'm talking about the basics: a warm place to live, a parent who is not exhausted from two low-paying jobs, or burned out and bitter because she has no social life or has missed the fun of her own teenage years.

**Adoption means love.**

Adoption can mean that you

care enough about your baby to help him/her find the best home. Many people don't know that a birth mother and even a birth father can be *active participants* in how the baby will live.

If you are a releasing teen mom, or even a releasing *teen couple*, adoption workers will let you see profiles of potential families. You can choose a family who shares your religious faith, who has a propensity for pets, or who loves to go to the beach. You can choose among families to ensure your baby has the type of home that you think is best.

In some states you can even meet the prospective parents. You cannot be forced to meet potential adoptive families if you are uncomfortable with a meeting. Many states have open adoptions in which you are able to keep in contact with the child if *you* want to arrange it that way.

The birth parents *always* have the right to preserve their privacy. Your baby will know your name and whereabouts only if *you* give permission for that to happen.

An accidental pregnancy is a frightening thing. I hope it never happens to you. However, if you or a friend should have to make choices about an unborn child, abortion and parenting are *not* the only choices. The adoption option may well be the "least worst" solution to a problem.

In your phone book under Social Services you will find listings for the Department of Social Services, the United Way, Crisis Pregnancy, Birthright, or Florence Crittenton Association. Any of these resources can help you. Your parents can call these agencies to obtain information for you if you are uncomfortable talking about your situation. Your school guidance counselor can direct you to agencies in your town that can help. Consider this as a positive part of the adoption option. ■

**Y**ou can choose among families to ensure your baby has the type of home that you think is best.



# ASK GARY

My mom found a crack pipe that a friend gave me to hold after giving up drugs. Now my parents think I'm a druggie, and I'm not. How can I get them to believe me? Marcos.

I'm afraid the only logical way is by gaining their trust. This could take time. Your parents are no doubt concerned and will be watching to see that you're on the up-and-up in not using drugs. You may not get them to believe your innocence as far as finding the pipe, but you can convince them of your clean and sober lifestyle. Next time stay far away from drugs and drug paraphernalia. It's not worth it to help out a friend this way.

I'm frustrated and need your help. A few dozen times in the past year I've quit my heroin use, but always go back. Whenever I'm stressed to the max or after fighting with my folks, I can't help using. Is there an easier way? Kessa.

Sorry, there's no shortcut to getting and staying off dangerous drugs. Nor is there a way to avoid uncomfortable feelings and emotions. Next time you find yourself pressured, angry, or hurt, run to the nearest friend who will listen instead of automatically reaching for your favorite drug. It takes time and lots of confidence in yourself to change old behaviors and habits. Before long you'll find it easier to ride out the storms. Remember this: "Don't give up before the miracle happens." Stay strong, stay smart, stay clean—and you'll definitely find that miracle you need.

On the streets of New York, where I live, it's pretty common to see kids

my age selling dope for pocket change. Any suggestions for a teen like me looking to make a fast buck without having to work a regular job? Thomas.

Having a job, whether part- or full-time, builds responsibility, esteem, and an enormous feeling of self-worth. Drug dealing is a temporary solution toward financial security. Those making the choice to sell drugs could eventually wind up behind bars or dead. There are ways to earn cash without having to stoop so low as to be dishonest and break the law. Washing cars, mowing lawns, making crafts, and other chores are just a few. There's more to life than always looking to make a fast buck. Getting rich quick can sometimes take forever.

I was wondering if you think condoms are as safe as we think they are. And if a girl says she is taking birth-control pills, should you still use a condom? Tony.

I'm not certain how safe you or others your age think condoms are, but the truth is that nothing is safer than practicing total abstinence. What better way to avoid pregnancy, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases (not to mention hard times down the road)? There are thousands of young people who would give anything to go back in time and correct the mistakes that were made. Trouble is, it's not that simple. What's done is done, and having to live with the consequences can be horrid. So are condoms safe? Obviously not as safe as waiting until one's more mature, responsible, and married. Take my word—someday you'll be glad you did.



**G**o ahead, ask Gary his advice on some of those big, serious, touchy questions. This guy enjoys the rough-and-tumble of helping teens with some serious problems. Gary Somdahl is a dad who puts his skills as a licensed youth chemical dependency counselor to the real-world test all the time. His latest book is *Drugs and Kids*.

Send your questions to:

**ASK GARY,**

*Listen* magazine,

55 West Oak Ridge Drive,  
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740.



# Black Hole

Another night so cold and dark  
I'm lying in my bed,  
My jammies on, I'm covered up,  
With dreams all in my head.

Up like a sudden storm, at once  
The sound would come above,  
The raging fire of crashing words—  
Two people losing love.

This fire burned on and consumed all  
Until nothing left but ash.  
This loving hate was just enough  
To slice my heart a gash.

It seemed as though it would not end,  
As though I was the source.  
My parents' fire had now been doused;  
Blown out by the divorce.

My dad moved out, took all his stuff;  
I thought he would be back.  
Without two parents I did think  
My life would jump its track.

I guess sometimes love just cannot last,  
Although you want it to.  
It's strange how much their love had changed  
From back when they said "I do."

It's different now that it's all done.  
My life has changed a lot.  
This story's writer is quite sane  
For such a tragic plot.

I think this all turned real well:  
My parents get along.  
I love them both and sing with them  
A newly written song.

Mike Notermann, 18  
Hutchinson, Minnesota

# CHRISTMAS

When I see crystals dancing in the air, I  
think of white hills and white trees. A white  
blanket covering up the ugly green grass and  
the ugly green trees. I think of happy families  
going on sleigh rides and ice skating on frozen  
ponds.

When I see crystals dancing in the air, I see  
the north wind's face. Its chubby cheeks, its  
cute, round, red nose, and its cold breath  
blowing every which way. I see its beautiful  
white hair falling to the earth.

When I see crystals dancing in the air, I  
hear screams and laughter of happy children. I  
hear the slush of snow, ringing of bells, and  
cheerful carolers singing happy Christmas  
tunes.

When I see crystals dancing in the air, I  
smell pine. Pine from dazzling Christmas  
trees—trees that glitter and sparkle with odd  
shapes and colors that I could stare at forever.  
Trees that glow and shine when the lights are  
out. This is no dream . . . This is Christmas!

Maria Goffredo, 12  
Camillus, New York

## Silence Creates Noise

Silence seems to create noise  
to pacify its own boredom.  
Even on the calmest of nights  
a faint rustling or stirring can be heard.  
Is this the work of our own vivid imaginations,  
or is true silence nonexistent?

Jeremiah Pitt  
Chapel Hill, Tennessee



# LISTENING

## FEEDBACK FROM READERS



## HAPPINESS

## SNOWSTORM

A boy and his grandpa—  
Running, jumping, smiling,  
Having fun,  
Enjoying life.  
Not having problems.  
No hate, no racism, no worries.  
No young, no old, no death—  
Just happiness.

Jason Tercero  
Apple Valley, Minnesota

Walking to school in a  
blizzard is like being  
in a white room with a light so bright  
I can't see.

My fingers are  
ice cubes frozen together.  
My ears the color of red Delicious apples.  
My face feels like someone  
glued it in one position.

Trying to get through heavy snow  
feels like walking through wet cement.

I am thinking of trying to get  
home to my warm bed and  
sleeping like a bear,  
But my feet have stopped moving  
like the roots of a tree  
frozen to the ground.

Joshua Rose, 17  
New City, New York

## DIVERSITY

Scary, new,  
never seen before.  
Don't know what will happen,  
or what it will do.  
Never seen before.  
Also exciting—something new.  
A new moon is just as exciting  
as the first day of spring.  
But the first day of winter  
is scary.

Jessica Mathewson, 13  
Camillus, New York









**W**hen Jake Burton first popularized snowboarding in the late 1970s, critics thought it was a passing fad—that it would fade out as quickly as melting snow. In fact, at first many resorts didn't even allow it. Now, a decade and a half later, shredd sledding comprises more than 10 percent of all U.S. mountain resort ticket sales. And



ILLUSTRATION: ED GUTHERO



More and more  
alpine teens  
are getting  
totally board.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF  
BURTON SNOWBOARDS

A R T I C L E   B Y   S H E L L I E   M .   F R E Y





- *The high-flying Burton Snowboards Team Riders are Derek Heidt (24), Shannon Dunn (25A), Joe Curtes (25B), Christine Rauter (26A), Jason Brown (26B). Burton Snowboards pictured are (left) The Custom 59 and Supermodel 68 (right).*



with thousands of newcomers every year, some industry analysts project it will be up to 30 percent in another decade.

So what's all the hype about, anyway? "It's a new and exciting change" from skiing, says Sun Valley's Eric Opple, 17, about the sport that combines surfing, skiing, and skateboarding. "You can go down steeper hills, 'cause you can go sideways," says David Eric, 14, who has been snowboarding exclusively since he first tried it three years ago. David especially enjoys "the speed, jumping, and trying tricks in the air. Skis have more limitations," he adds. Some boarders say that they feel "freer" than skiing, and others describe the sport as "a dance on snow."

Snowboarders say that their sport is easier to learn than skiing. "You just need balance," explains national slalom champ Dena Melim, 17. "I've seen people who've never been on snow pick up snowboarding right away. I even taught my mom," she adds. "She loves it!"

Most snow surfers say it takes about two or three days to learn. "You end up on your rear a lot when you first try snowboarding," explains 14-year-old Jeff Anderson. "It helps to have somebody encourage you and give you some idea of what you are doing."

#### Get on Board

Getting into snowboarding has never been easier. Start by renting a snowboard and boots at a ski area, and take a lesson from a certified instructor who can show you the basics. Most equipment costs about \$25 a day. Lessons range from \$30 to \$50 a day, and lift tickets range from \$20 to \$40. Although these prices can get as steep as a diamond run, many ski areas offer "newcomer packages" for snowboarders that include a lift ticket, lesson, and rentals for one low price.

To shred, snowboarders stand sideways on the board with boots

buckled into bindings. To turn, they press on the edges of the board. To stop, they skid the edges into the snow. Once you've learned to balance on a board and have mastered a basic turn, *Skiing* magazine's Kerri Harmon, who's also a member of the National Snowboarding Demonstration Team, provides the following tips to help prepare you for steeper terrain:

"Just like a ski, a snowboard has a sidecut—the hourglass shape that's narrower in the waist and

**Snowboarding  
combines  
surfing,  
skiing, and  
skateboarding.**

**It's a new and exciting  
change from skiing, but  
take it easy at first, as  
you can easily find  
yourself in some pretty  
gnarly wipeouts!**

wider at the shoulder and heel. When you apply pressure to your board, it bends into a curved shape similar to the arc of the turn. By applying and releasing pressure at the right moments in the turn, you can make turning easier. Try the following exercises on a flat area: Start with proper body alignment—back straight and knees slightly bent. From this stance, flex your knees and ankles slowly to drop into a low stance. Then slowly rise back up to a tall stance. To make sure you do it slowly, flex to a count of three, then extend to a count of three. Remember to flex your knees, not

your hips or back.

"Next, try flexing and extending while traversing across a wide, easy, groomed run. (Be sure to watch for oncoming boarders or skiers above.) Before you reach the side of the slope, stand up tall. This will begin to flatten your board (decrease the edge angle), and gravity will pull its nose into the fall line to start the turn. As your board moves into the new turn, begin flexing to a count of three as you tip your board onto its new edge. This will put pressure on your board, bending it into the arc, which will help keep the turn going. The slower you flex and extend, the larger the turn will be. If you want to make shorter turns, increase the cadence [speed] of your flexing and extending action. Take your time and find the rhythm and turn shapes that suit you and the terrain."

Remember to take it easy at first, because you can easily find yourself in some pretty gnarly wipeouts. "One time I tried to go down a really steep run, fell, and slid 30 yards on my stomach," recalls Kevin Jones, 11, who also recalls quite a few cheers from the chairlift riders. "Last year," he continues, "I was going down a hill and the edge of my board got caught in the snow. I tumbled about 20 feet down the mountain and got a bloody nose."

"You can't learn stuff if you never crash," explains David Eric, who's known for performing multiple cartwheels during his wipeouts. "You have to go for things," he says.

So shred your inhibitions and go with the snow flow till your heart's content. Who knows, you could discover a whole new world getting totally board! ▀

• Listen would like to thank *Burton Snowboards* for the use of these supercool action and product shots.



# BRANDON HAMMOND

(continued from page 17)

*TV Guide* as the best child performer of the year [1997]?

**Brandon:** It's very exciting; it's great. It's just an honor, because not that many kids get to be selected by *TV Guide*. I'm very blessed.

**Listen:** What do you think most contributed to your success?

**Brandon:** My mom, because it's been just me and my mom for 12 years, and she just got remarried last year on Valentine's Day. She had to be my mom and dad at the same time. And I never had a father figure, so she was very strict on me. She was my acting coach, too. She'd go over the lines with me. God, too, because I'm a very strong Christian, a strong believer in God. My family get together and have something we call family prayer. Maybe I'll pray one week and my mom will pray the next week. We also read the Bible on the same day. I think God has definitely blessed me.

**Listen:** So how do you keep yourself grounded working in Hollywood and on TV?

**Brandon:** I keep myself grounded with God and my mom. I remember that it wasn't always easy for me. I started off as a background worker. I did little bit parts here and there. I'd be the kid walking down the street, or something like that. I mean, it wasn't easy. To get a movie like *Soul Food* does wonders for me. I can't just let it go to my head as a kid. It was my friends and my family who supported me. I just have to keep that in mind.

**Listen:** What is a typical day like for you on the set?

**Brandon:** I have to get up at 6:00 in the morning and go to school at 8:00. The show is about a widower working hard, trying to

raise a son on his own, while getting back out into the dating scene. His son is in puberty, and he's starting to like girls, and so I've been pretty heavily used in the scripts that they've been writing.

It's hard for me to do school at the same time, because I have to have at least three hours of school. So while my call would really be like a 9:00 to 10:00 call, I have to get up and come in at 8:00 just for school. I get in an hour of school, and then they will call me



down on the set, and I do my thing here. Then right away they will call me back up for school. So it's rough. I think children should get some credit, because it's hard to do school and be an actor at the same time.

I haven't been able to do the things I used to do, like play football, play on the basketball team, and hang out with my friends. But I come from a big

family, so I have a lot of cousins I spend time with. I try to be around my friends as much as possible. Legally I can only do nine and a half hours, so if they call me in at 8:00, I have to be out of there by 5:30. It used to be they could work kids all night, but they changed that rule.

**Listen:** What do you like better, working on television or in movies?

**Brandon:** I like both. The thing I like about movies is the traveling. You get to go all over the world, and you get to meet new people, big stars. But then I like television because it is steady work, especially if you're a regular on a show and you become family. That's how it is now with *The Gregory Hines Show*. We've all become very tight with each other.

**Listen:** What do you like most about working on TV?

**Brandon:** One thing that I like is getting a chance to work with Gregory Hines. How many people can say they actually work with Gregory Hines five days a week and just get to be with him? He gives you hugs in the morning, and he's just a great guy. And it's not only Gregory Hines, but Wendell Pierce, Robin Riker, Mark Tymchyshyn, and everyone on the set, the directors, the producers, that's the great thing.

**Listen:** So is Gregory Hines the same in real life as he is in the show?

**Brandon:** His son Zac actually came out from New York, and we spent time together. We were talking about girls, having a good time talking about video games, and doing boy stuff. Gregory, he's very open to his son. And that's how he is on the show. I sometimes come to him for advice on girls, and he's just a great friend.

**Listen:** Do you think you'll continue acting as you become an adult?

**Brandon:** You don't know what



you're going to do as you get older. I'm just taking it one day at a time. Things are going great for me right now. But I would say in a year or two, if it doesn't work out, I would really like to study medicine and be a doctor. I plan on going to college and going as many years as it takes, but acting is on my agenda right now.

**Listen:** What was it like working with people like Michael Jordan and Whitney Houston?

**Brandon:** Very exciting. I try to approach every actor as just another colleague, but when you get to work with people like Michael Jordan, Robert De Niro, and Westley Snipes, you sometimes do get starstruck. I do admit I sometimes go, "Whoa, Westley Snipes!" But I got to play his son in a film, and it's just great working with those types of people. It's awesome. I remember the first time I met Michael Jordan, I was so starstruck he told me, "Hey, calm down, man." I got to shake his hand and we talked a bit, and he was a nice guy.

**Listen:** What would be your advice to teens who want to get into show business as a career?

**Brandon:** Follow your dreams.

You can do anything you put your mind to. Make sure it is something you really want to do, because a lot of my friends used to say, "Whoa, acting; you're lucky because you get to get out of school." No, you still have to do school. That's what some kids don't realize. Follow your heart; don't give up if you are a struggling actor. Keep your mind straight.

**Listen:** What is your view on drugs?

**Brandon:** It's a very bad thing. Drug use can ruin your life. You hear stories like those about Todd Bridges; I hope I never turn out to be like him. I tell kids not to give in to peer pressure. Sometimes you're going to slip and fall in life. But as a Christian, I know that's the time you have to pray even harder to be guided in the right direction. Yes, there is drug use in the acting business. A lot of actors try to keep it low profile, as if they don't do drugs, when they really do. You just have to watch yourself, wherever you are—in the real world and the acting biz. I just hope that I can continue to be a good example and a good role model. ■



• Brandon and Gregory Hines clown around on the set of *The Gregory Hines Show*.

**"I**t's been just me and my mom for 12 years... She had to be my mom and my dad at the same time."

*Listen*

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# JUST BETWEEN US

## THE REST OF MY LIFE

It's all too easy to read the numbers, the statistics, the trends, and the demographics and ignore the real people and the real stories that lie behind them.

In an imperfect world where we are often forced to make compromises, it's easy to lose sight of the real moral issues.

Let me tell you about Krystle Newquist. Krystle is an avid baseball player—it seems that she is more than a passable pitcher. Looking at a photograph of Krystle in her Little League uniform, I see a clear-eyed, trim-figured 14-year-old who obviously likes to win and is in the game for the long haul.

But something went strangely wrong for Krystle and her team last season when in the season opener she was brought in as a relief pitcher.

The team had been trailing 6-1 in the third inning of the game. But when Krystle took over, it turned around and they pulled off an 11-8 victory. Good news. And congratulations to a winning young woman!

But wait a minute. Krystle had not worn the team's jersey. In fact, she refused to wear that jersey, because it bore the name of their sponsor—a local tavern.

"I hate alcohol," said Krystle. "And if I put the uniform on, I would be a walking billboard for it."

It's a little sad that officials decided that Krystle could not play again unless she wore the jersey. She was also not allowed to change teams. So Krystle sat on the sidelines for the remaining 13 games.

Who's the loser in this sort of situation? Certainly not Krystle. She had a great time participating in the team action even if she was thwarted in adding her skills to the team's season victory.

Krystle expressed the real situation when she said, "I will play softball for only three or four more years, but everything I stand for will be with me for the rest of my life."

*Listen* magazine salutes Krystle and many other young people like her who are standing for principle and for drug-free success. Even if it means short-term trouble, harassment, and ridicule, such a stand always means long-term success, health, and fulfillment.

By the way, Krystle had very good reasons for her stance. She said she was just practicing what her school drug and alcohol education program had taught her. And she knows firsthand the dangers of alcohol. Her grandfather died of liver cirrhosis caused by alcohol.



## L I N C O L N   S T E E D

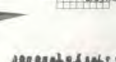
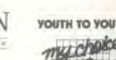
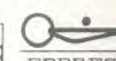
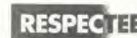
Editor **Lincoln E. Steed**  
Assistant Editor **Anita L. Jacobs**

Designer **Ed Guthero**  
Sales Director **Ginger Church**

**Editorial Consultants:** Winton Beaven, Ph.D.; Hans Diehl, Dr.H.Sc., M.P.H.; Winston Ferris; Patricia Mutch, Ph.D.; Thomas R. Neslund; Stoy Proctor, M.P.H.; Francis A. Soper, Litt.D.; Jennifer Acklam; DeWitt Williams, Ph.D.; Lars Justinen; Ed Guthero.



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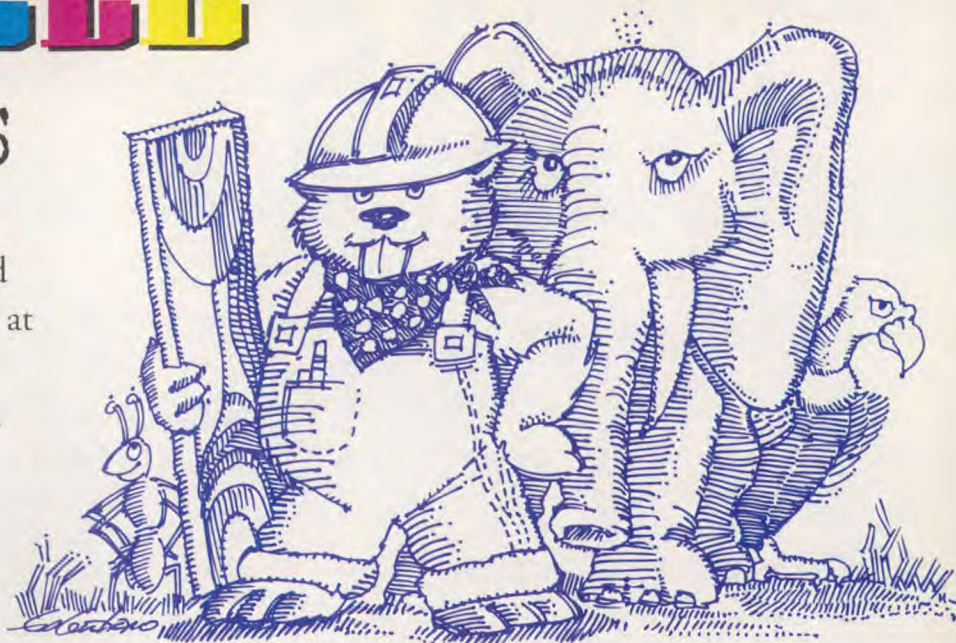


# PUZZLE

BY JULIANA LEWIS

## JOB NATURALS

Twelve animals are named below. Twelve jobs are listed at the right. If these animals could apply for human jobs, which one would each be most suited for?



1. elephant \_\_\_\_\_
2. vulture \_\_\_\_\_
3. chimpanzee \_\_\_\_\_
4. ant \_\_\_\_\_
5. mud dauber wasp \_\_\_\_\_
6. inchworm \_\_\_\_\_
7. beaver \_\_\_\_\_
8. camel \_\_\_\_\_
9. garden spider \_\_\_\_\_
10. kangaroo \_\_\_\_\_
11. lark \_\_\_\_\_
12. penguin \_\_\_\_\_

- A. land surveyor
- B. scuba diver
- C. crane operator
- D. opera singer
- E. sanitation engineer
- F. broad-jump coach
- G. trapeze artist
- H. net maker
- I. crop harvester
- J. water conservationist
- K. potter
- L. house builder

Answers: 1.C. 2.E. 3.G. 4.I. 5.K. 6.A. 7.L. 8.J. 9.H. 10.F. 11.D. 12.B.

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