

Teens recall drug days as nightmare

Second of five articles

By Nancy Berlier
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MT. REPOSE, Ohio — Andy [redacted] is a robot—to his old friends, that is.

When 11 people were killed at the Dec. 3, 1979, Who concert in Cincinnati, Andy and his friends—all high on drugs—were there.

"I was bragging about that great concert," said Andy, 19, of Pisgah. "People got killed. I stepped on people. I crunched bones."

Andy said he would do anything to impress his old friends. After the Who concert, they were impressed.

"THAT NIGHT, I deliberately pounded my hand up against the side of a table so I could show an injury," he said.

Since then, Andy has gone through an intensive drug rehabilitation program at Straight Inc. in St. Petersburg, Fla. He returned to Pisgah when Straight opened a center in Mt. Repose. Now, Andy is the center's senior staff member.

Because of the change, Andy said his old friends leave notes on his car saying, "Look at the robot."

To Andy, that is ironic.

"Like now I'm screwed up, but before I was fine," he said.

IF ANYONE is a robot, Andy said it is a person who does whatever his friends say is cool

The Straight story

—even if that means taking drugs or hurting other people.

Andy did not enter Straight voluntarily. He thought he was going with his parents on a Florida vacation. Once in Straight's program, he fought it.

He has reconciled with his parents. And, although he realizes that because of the drugs he had taken he could not have controlled his movements in the crowd outside the Who concert, he said he feels badly about the attitude he had.

At some point, like most kids in Straight's program, Andy made a commitment to get straight.

SO DID a 13-year-old Mt. Carmel youth, who had become the "big man" on his West Clermont elementary school campus when he began taking drugs at age 10.

"I got myself into drugs, but my brother brought them home," he said.

His big brother brought home marijuana, hashish, hash oil, amphetamines, barbiturates and cocaine.

Looking back with maturity that belies his 13 years, the youth said his worst drug ex-



Andy [redacted] now a senior staff member at Straight.

Photographer: JACK KLUMPE

perience was when his older brother put white powder on a table at home and told him to "lay it out." The youth said he thought it was cocaine.

"He (his brother) laughed and said it was powder," the youth said.

"I REMEMBER feeling scared after that because I thought my brother was going to do something to me, that he was going to put something else in there."

Despite bad episodes, the boy clung to his drug habit because it was part of his image ... just like his long hair, ragged jeans and hiking boots.

"I thought my brother went as far as he did and I could keep up," the boy said.

Image was important to a 19-year-old Delhi youth, too.

SHE TOOK her first drink of alcohol in the ninth grade during a football game.

"I remember I was scared to do it, but I saw all these older kids doing it," she said.

By the time she reached the 11th grade, she was taking quaaludes regularly at the vocational school she attended. She bought the drugs from

friends at school with money she stole from her grandmother and father.

A friend also introduced an 18-year-old from Anderson, Ind., to drugs.

"It was homecoming day," she said, "and she (the friend) asked if I wanted to get high. I said, 'Yeah.' All my friends were doing it. I did alcohol, pot and speed at the same time."

SHE SAID a promiscuous lifestyle—sex with nine different boys since she was 14—contributed to her drug habit.

"I was into a lot of acceptance with people," she said.

A 16-year-old Mt. Healthy boy said he began smoking marijuana in junior high school after he quit sports.

"I started doing drugs, not as an escape as much as to be liked by people," he said. "People made fun of me because I was big."

He cried when he talked about one of his friends who took drugs and was killed in a police chase.

ONE NIGHT while he was high, he said he fell out of a pickup truck and broke his

back. Later, he quit school.

"I felt really scared. I didn't know where I was going in life," he said.

He stole money from his mother and stepfather, a police officer, and finally was kicked out of his house.

Without a home, he said he drifted, sleeping on the ground, except when a druggie friend gave him a place to sleep for the night. After a month, he called his mother and asked her for help. She had prepared herself for his call and told him he was going to Straight.

"IF IT weren't for Straight, right now, I'd be dead," he said.

While these youths said they were committed to staying straight, they agreed the critical test would be how they adjust outside Straight's program.

"There's going to be that time when someone's going to ask me, 'Do you want some drugs,'" the Delhi teenager said. "I don't look up to them. I don't look up to druggies now. I know there are a lot of people out there who are screwed up, but I'm one of the lucky ones."

Next: The parents.