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Season 05. Episode 11

Podcast Title: My Love Affair With Marijuana

Hi, this is Bruno J. and welcome to Episode 11 of season 5 of my podcast Busting Addiction and its Myths. This episode is dedicated to my love affair with marijuana. Why would anyone do that? Dedicate a whole story to a love affair with a drug?

First, let's give credit to where credit is due.

First, a plug for my sponsor who has given me the opportunity to help the families and loved ones of alcoholics and addicts better understand the nature of the disease and what they can and shouldn't do about it. We say in our podcast and blog that our primary goal is to help you make an informed decision at this critical stage of your life.

SafeHouse Rehab Thailand represents the *modern approach to recovery*, founded on Safety, which is why we absolutely outperform

traditional rehabs when it comes to intake/detox, technology and aftercare.

To learn more about our modern, advanced approach to recovery, we invite you to visit www.safehousererehab.com or send your questions and comments to info@safehousererehab.com

If your loved one is an active or recovering addict or alcoholic, you are likely struggling with answers to your many questions as to how to help get your loved clean and sober.}

So why would I want to tell you the personal story of my love affair with marijuana?

My purpose in this podcast of over 60 episodes, one a week for the last 13 months, is to bring you the truth about addiction, including alcoholism, and occasionally bust a myth or two.

That entails that I peel the lid off the surface of addiction to see what's underneath.

What my counsellor saw just before she helped me sober up for good in 1993 (I hope for good but there are no guarantees if I don't stay on top of my recovery game) was a 46-year old professional man who looked and was strung out...nervous, skinny, smoking incessantly, unemployed - fired from a six-figure job - and telling her the story of my addiction to alcohol and dope, aka as Mary Jane, ganja, weed, marijuana, pot.

The point here is that most people have little clue as to how long some addicts have been addicted and how deeply a particular drug has embedded itself into the very fabric of one's life.

The truth is that for the vast majority of users of an easily available, relatively cheap and quasi-illegal drug like marijuana, smoking it came early, usually in their mid-teens like 16.

As did drinking, so together with dope, you had the perfect little party of passing the joint and drinking beer.

At that point for most users, it is a take it or leave it deal, except for the compulsive tug of the peer group.

For some other users, however, it's the beginning of their life-long love affair with the drug marijuana. You do not know at that point who is going where with this thing. I sure had no idea where "it" would take me.

But "it" and other drugs and alcohol took me all the way to the bottom, or more accurately, it was my flagrant abuse of substances that had me slide down a slippery slope into a living hell which I escaped by sheer desperation.

My love affair story with Mary Jane starts when I was about 18 when I tried a toke in my sophomore year - I was one of those who was only 17 when I started college out East, an unsupervised juvenile. I was serious about school, however, and I did graduate with decent grades, then got a master's degree in Chicago in short order.

I saved seeds from my dope and planted them in a quart basket over spring break in the greenhouse where we were getting the tobacco crop started. My family owned a tobacco farm in Ontario, Canada (yes, they grow tobacco in Ontario to this day - check it out), so I was an old hand at growing many different types of plants, given we grew cover crops as well.

I said to my mom: "Mother, could you or John give this botany project some water as you water the tobacco, then keep doing it even after the tobacco is replanted?" But of course, my boy.

Best mom in the world. Taking care of my dope.

When I came home for summer vacation in late May, the dope was getting tall, and my mom said: "Sonny boy, that botany project looks

like "Kanape" ...the Lithuanian word for cannabis, or hemp. I told her not to worry; it will be out of there shortly.

My younger brother John and I replanted about a dozen or so of said plants in a clearing at the edge of a tobacco field with lots of sun and good drainage. That sandy loam soil is the world's best for certain kinds of crops.

The dope grew to a height of ten feet by Labour Day. The buds were the size of a fist. We pulled down all the plants without stripping the buds, then dried the entire plant in a tobacco kiln without letting our dad know what the heck we were doing.

We then stripped the buds, shaved them a bit, then bagged the dope and ended selling and giving away about 10 pounds of dope in town. My brother and I earned the distinction of becoming the original dope men in our area. Quite the distinction.

But that was too much work.

My next move, at the age of 19 or so, was just to deal it, not just grow and deal it. My supplier contact was my fiancé's girlfriend whose boyfriend bought and sold dope in not a serious way. A hobby.

So, I said to him: "Dave, can you get me a kilo for starters? I want to see how it goes in Toronto". Dave, however, lived and dealt in Detroit, so I would have to slip over the Canada/US border with a kilo of Mary Jane in my Pontiac.

Sure enough, I buy a kilo - it's compressed into a 2 X 6 X 10-inch block - which I place in a toiletry kit and slide under the driver's seat, that's all.

You have to understand the distances involved. The family farm is 190 miles from Detroit, a 2 1/2-hour drive when you average 90 miles an hour with stops, which they let you do back then.

Then, Toronto is another 250 miles from Detroit, while the farm is about 90 miles south of Toronto. So, I drive across the border at Sarnia, Ontario ...no sweat. Imagine getting caught with a dealer's quantity of dope. Then another 340 miles to Toronto to sell the dope, then home.

For my troubles and risk, I made \$400. Buy for \$400, sell for \$800.

Lots of sampling along the way, of course. Got to make sure it's any good.

I made it home about 9 am after driving all night. My dad was waiting for me, steaming because I should have been on the tractor two hours ago.

This is just one example of how I integrated marijuana into my life as if it were no big deal.

More follows.

My brother and I got a hold of some hashish and we would drive around farm country high as kites at night, marvelling at the effect, drinking beer, impressing our friends with our generosity.

Pot had not yet become a daily ritual as it did much later.

When I moved to New York in the early 80's, I found a very convenient means of getting the pot I wanted. I asked one of my ad agency friends at the time: "David, where can I get some really good stuff real easy"? He turned me on to a pot delivery service called WeDe, as in We Deliver. You call a number, tell them who sent you, as in David H., and then ask what's on the menu. They'll say, oh we have Maui Wowee, California Sens, Colombian Dynamite, and so on. Then the price, say, \$50 an ounce and "don't forget to tip the delivery guy".

He's one of those bicycle guys you see all over town, and he comes only to your place of business. So, the receptionist at my office at

29th and Park Avenue tells me there's a delivery for me. The guy brings his bike into the elevator - not uncommon - and comes into my office; I close the door and he opens his big leather bag and it's holding the biggest stash of dope I have ever seen. My bag is coded. I hand him \$70 to cover the ounce and his tip.

One of several New York stories. I think the weirdest one was when I went looking to bring a whole bunch of pot to a reunion where I was the designated dope man. I went into Bryant Park behind the New York Public Library on 5th Avenue. The park was then a bad place with dope dealers and shooters all over. The dealers would creep along the sidewalk sort of loud whispering "smoke smoke" and you would then go somewhere else to make the exchange.

I connected to a guy, he went to a car and then we both walked into a peep show on Times Square nearby, went into the peep booth, paid ten bucks to have a woman show us her equipment as I paid the man \$150 and walked out...but the guy and I walked out together. Here I was, a man in a suit on a workday with a Rastafarian shaking my hand. Imagine if a colleague saw that. Silly risks one takes. But the New York cops could care less about small stuff like that.

One of the most embarrassing events and one that showed how dependent on marijuana I was getting happened on a flight.

I decided for God knows what reason that I would toke in the bathroom on the flight. I lit up a joint, then blew the smoke into the toilet as it vacuum-flushed the smoke out. When I got back to my seat, the fellow next to me said: "I can smell what you just did, and I should have you arrested and thrown off the plane. You are a dumb son of a bitch".

I sat there for another hour in mortified silence, but lucky for me, the guy just said: "You were lucky this time. You are not worth my trouble".

So now I will fast forward to close out the story of my ill-fated love affair with Mrs. Marijuana. Keep in mind, I was also consuming vast amounts of alcohol near the end, and I was also using opiates at night because it kept my bed from spinning so I could sleep.

Toward the end, after I got fired from a great job because I had become catatonic, that is, frozen to the point of uselessness and paranoia, marijuana did not work for me at all. I couldn't get high. I could not escape reality or my feelings. I could not keep the terror of insanity at bay.

All I got was the sensation of having a nail driven into my skull.

Even after I stopped drinking for my first try at sobriety in 1992, I thought it was Ok to smoke pot. Good luck with that idea. I longed for a beer because, you see, my throat got so dry.

It wasn't until I completely surrendered a year later to the fact that I was completely and utterly powerless over alcohol and drugs, and sought help out of desperation, that it became crystal clear that I had to be 100% abstinent and not allow *any* mind-altering substance into my system.

And that realisation marked the beginning of a life of freedom from Mrs. Marijuana that started in July 1993. A happy divorce, to be sure.

What did we learn from my love affair with marijuana story?

1. It wasn't until I put on a new pair of glasses and looked back at my life to see how I had embedded a drug into my life as if it were the most natural thing in the world.
2. Even after extreme embarrassment, I continued to not acknowledge, to deny, that I was profoundly addicted to pot (in addition to alcohol and other drugs) and yet I continued to seek it out.

3. "It" starts early for most users, and because marijuana is cheap, easily available and socially acceptable, it becomes readily integrated into daily life for young people.
4. This is a place for me to tell you that today's pot is six to ten times more potent in its THC content than in the past; addiction comes faster and becomes more debilitating than ever before.
5. When I admitted that I was utterly powerless over marijuana and alcohol and sought help, I understood that I could not use any mind-altering substance to have a life free from the insanity I so feared.