

Brothers Are Letting Their Dreams Go Up In Smoke

Change always brings a person to some personal crossroad. The bigger the change, the more major the intersection of available choices becomes.

Nowadays, many people are facing major decisions because of the country's depressed economy and resulting layoffs, business failures, and manufacturing shut-downs. Personal bankruptcies and foreclosures on the ultimate American dream - the family home - have proliferated at an alarming rate.

It's sad to see whole families forced to lose the one thing they have worked years to attain and maintain because jobs are lost. That is an issue which has enough merit to be worthy of further discussion. But, the story I want to tell now is that of a black man - single, no children, approaching 40 - who has become a homeless victim, not because of the economy but because of the Black community's worst plague: drugs.

Jim's story is tragic for many reasons. It hurts terribly because he is very close to me. I remember his very frail, premature beginning, when he was tiny enough to be held

in the length of your hand. Growing up, his physical needs were met. He had plenty of food, nice clothes, a home in a lovely East

Vietnam opened a tiny chink in the emotional armor he had placed around himself. It took almost 20 years for the crack to widen and the

Crossroads

by Patricia Smith-Deering
Phoenix Managing Editor



Winston subdivision, toys, a dog, a good Catholic school and church where he was an avid altar boy, and a two-parent family with two loving sisters. It was all there, everyone thought - that real American dream.

Because Jim tended to be sickly, he was not physically mistreated a lot at home but the psychological abuse he suffered and the physical abuse he witnessed were unspeakable. Not very good academically, he became adept in automotive mechanics and in electronics. Jim escaped his home environment as soon as he was 18 and enlisted in the Army. A tour in

dam to break.

Jim came home from service and began to work as a mechanic at a prestigious but very racist white foreign car dealership. He bought his own dream - a lovely new three-bedroom trailer - and moved into a trailer park on the north end of town. When he wasn't working, he rested at home or did a little deejay work and light-and-sound shows for area bands. He was low-key, hardworking, and deeply troubled. But, he kept plugging away at a job he loved in a place he hated, leading a secret life that not long ago took its toll.

Drugs create their own economic boom and bust. If you deal or sell them, you can live like a king for a while. If you succumb to their allure and use them, it becomes a no-win, nightmare situation. I watched a man who endured abuse, injustice, and mistreatment, let his dreams go up in marijuana smoke and disappear in the momentary euphoria of alcohol and rock cocaine. He left his 15-year job after paying off his trailer and "retired" from life. I watched him go in and out of mental health centers and alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs from here to Butner when he wanted to escape the reality and consequences of his excesses and irresponsibility.

When he couldn't escape any longer, he went to jail for bad checks he had written to support a habit he declared he could do nothing to stop. His sisters got him out and attempted to keep him out. Jim had to sell his trailer - his dream that over the years came to mirror the shambles he was making of his life. Just when he should have been at rock bottom, his sisters "enabled" him again after he disappeared for

Continued on Page 12



BOUND FOR DETROIT, MICHIGAN

The Williford Family Reunion is Sponsoring
A Bus Trip To Detroit, Michigan on
July 23 - 27, 1992

to make reservations for this fun-filled weekend,
and also for further information, please contact:

Mrs. Mabel Walker
(919) 766-8803

or

Mrs. Olivia Allen
(919) 721-1776

Rates are Reasonable

OGBURN STATION

PAWNBROKERS Inc.

"Loans For Your Valuable Merchandise"

- Cameras ● VCR's ● Stereos ● Tools ● Guns
- Jewelry ● TV's ● Musical Instruments

Excellent Merchandise At Tremendous Savings!

BUY ★ SELL ★ TRADE

MON.-FRI 9-5, SAT. 9-2
Ogburn Station Shop. Ctr.
WINSTON-SALEM

767-1880