

# Dope Users Always Live With Fear

## Thousands in This Area Feel Secrecy, Despair

This is the third of a series of six articles on the problems of narcotics addicts as told to a Times reporter by doctors, law enforcement officers and the addicts themselves. — Ed. note.

BY HARRY NELSON

"I've never seen an addict who wasn't meant to be one.

"When I was a kid, I knew I would become either an addict or an alcoholic.

"The fact that my father was an alcoholic and I saw what he went through dissuaded me from going that route. I had to escape some way. And I thought addiction was an escape."

My Narcotics Anonymous friend was continuing the story of his life as an addict. He had been an addict seven years. He had been forced into crime in order to support it. Most people can't afford \$50 a day for heroin.

"No one can be cured of the habit unless he wants to be cured. And if you're a real addict, you won't want to be cured until you've gotten so low that you can't go lower. Then you'll either commit suicide or start back up."

### Thousands in City

There are thousands of active addicts in Los Angeles. Nobody knows how many. They live in dark underground secrecy and despair. They live in constant fear of getting caught.

Their plight can be compared with the victims of venereal diseases 50 years ago. These people were despised and rejected also. They were driven underground just as the addict is today.

Then a cure was found and the public demanded that the situation be cleaned up.

Unfortunately, there is no medical cure for narcotics addiction. But this does not mean that the problem can be corrected by driving addicts underground.

"Stiff penalties against addiction are like laws against lunacy," the NA member said.

Addicts are not the only persons who believe this. There are many persons who command public respect who say the same thing.

Richard A. McGee, director of corrections for the State of California, said earlier that same day that "tremendous penalties won't solve the narcotics problem because even if the penalty were death, there would be an addiction problem."

Dr. Walter Bailey, formerly with the California Paroles Division, told an Assembly interim committee investigating narcotics:

"Until the public understands the problem, the hands of officials are pretty well tied.

"I feel it does absolutely no good to send a narcotics addict to prison."

### Views of Officers

Although it is difficult to find a law officer willing to say that addicts should not be sent to prison, there are some who believe that severe penalties are not the solution.

Chief Joseph M. Gaalken of the Sheriff's division of corrections, told The Times, "Law enforcement officers are apprehensive about severe penalties because they make convictions more difficult.

"I believe that it takes more than a deprivation of drugs and medicine to cure an addict. I believe that an organization like Narcotics Anonymous can offer the addict the kind of help he

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# DOPE ADDICTS

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needs—help from other addicts who understand his problem.”

## See Seamy Side

Most police officers have a very bitter opinion of addicts who commit horrible crimes because they need money for more dope. And it's the officers' job to enforce the laws against illegal use of narcotics.

Capt. William H. Madden, commander of the narcotics division of the Los Angeles Police Department, says, "We know that addicts can't be cured by putting them in jail. When we arrest users it is because we know they are often associated with other crimes."

As could be expected, most addicts don't consider policemen as their friends, either.

"When we first began organizing five years ago, the police gave us a lot of trouble," an NA member told me.

"We had to operate like an underground. We moved the location of our meetings every week. One reason why there were only 20 addicts at the meeting tonight is because the hard cases are afraid to show up. They figure that an NA meeting is a good place to get picked up by the cops."

"In the beginning, narcotics squad detectives used to stand outside a meeting place and give us a rough time when we came out. This hasn't happened lately, but they still stop us on the street sometimes and make us roll up our sleeves to see if there are any hype marks."

Capt. Madden told me, "We have enough work to keep all our men—and more—busy—just working on the peddlers, let alone spending time attending or heckling NA meetings."

## Another of Gripes

The addicts have another gripe with policemen. They say that the police use the publicity-potent narcotics problem as a means of gaining prestige for the department.

"There are pushers—lots of them—within four blocks of the City Hall," one addict said. "The cops know where they are, but they don't want to clean them out because being able to stage a dope raid periodically takes pressure off other areas of law enforcement where things might not be going so well."

"Staging a raid now and then is good newspaper publicity for the police. But they don't really want to clean it up because it is handier to keep it on ice."

He told me another story that may be hard to believe. He said that pushers stand outside the downtown Hall of Justice and wait for the release of addicts who have been held in the County Jail.

When the addict walks out, he said, the pusher either makes a sale on the spot or else tails the addict to another part of town where he makes a sale.

"What we would like to see," the addict said, "is a network of clinics around town where an addict could go for withdrawal care without fear of being picked up by the police."

"Such a program would include a medical cure, group therapy and an integrated Narcotics Anonymous program. We're hoping to interest psychiatrists who are willing to work with addicts."

"People think that since an addict spent \$50 or \$75 a day for narcotics before he went clean, he can be expected to pay \$30 a day for treatment."

"An addict has a difficult time getting a job because he often has a jail record and there is the stigma of having been an addict. No one will trust him."

"Very often this rejection

triggers the old feeling of inferiority that seems able to be soothed only by the use of dope."

Sometimes dramatic presentation of facts is needed to attract attention to a problem. And attention should be drawn to the plight of the addict.

## Still Sick People

People who listen to addicts leave themselves open to being considered naive. Who ever heard of listening to a dope fiend? They're notorious liars. They'll say anything for sympathy.

But they're still sick people who need help and understanding. There is an increasing number of doctors, judges, laymen and lawmen who are aware of the fact that narcotics addiction cannot be cured by jail sentences.

But their voices generally are drowned out by the uninformed and the vengeful.

**Tomorrow: How the crowded jails and Federal and State hospitals handle narcotics addicts.**