

# Hooked on dope; no help in sight

By CRAIG PIECHURA  
What does a home that a heroin addict came from look like? In this case, there are fine antiques in the living rooms and beautifully-colored prints hanging on the wall. The mother, who will remain anonymous as a condition of the interview, contacted the Observer after she read a story in a newspaper detailing her son's arrest for two crimes with a handgun.



She wanted to tell "the story behind the story"—the unmentioned fact that her son has been fighting an on-and-off battle with heroin for three years. Committing four armed robberies in two days, her son, who is in his late 20's, made no attempt to conceal his face and drove off in a vehicle registered in his name. Mrs. Jones (not her real name) believes her son committed the robberies out of desperation. At the arraignment her son (whom we'll call Joe) admitted his guilt and said he did it "to get caught."

Mrs. Jones said the crime had an immediate purpose and a long-range one. First, he did it to obtain money to buy heroin, which is scarce and expensive this summer. And if he was caught, he'd be locked up and, hopefully, treated for his addiction.

THE MOTHER'S STORY is partly a mother sticking up for her son whom she loves. The rest of it is painfully true. "Behind that nice, colonial facade of Plymouth, there's a bad drug problem," said Mrs. Jones. "People won't admit it until it hits them where they live."

"When we knew (Joe) had this problem he'd been married about six months. We tried private clinics to treat the problem but if he wanted to leave he could just walk out the door. There's no place to be locked up for a heroin problem except jail. And I

a week and it wasn't long before he was back on heroin. "They can treat a heroin problem physically in about a week with medicine. But it's the mental thing—the addiction personality—that's toughest to kick."

MRS. JONES believes that the sinister reputation of heroin and heroin addicts is partly responsible for the lack of facilities to treat these people. "There are plenty of places to treat alcoholics but try to find a good place to treat heroin addiction," she said.

One of the places her son stayed in for treatment was located on Cass Ave. in the heart of Detroit's dope and prostitute center—the Salvation Army's Harbor Light Center. "Two blocks away you can get all the drugs you want," she said. "And patients are permitted to leave the facility during the day. Tell me, does that make sense?"

Mrs. Jones does not say her son should be excused for the crimes he committed because he is an addict. But she does maintain that the government has a responsibility to treat any addict who wants help.

Joe's recent felony arrest was not the first time her son has been in trouble with the law. He was booked for possession of a joint seven years ago and possession of a non-narcotic barbiturate last year when police found him sleeping in his car.

Mrs. Jones has high praise for some police officers who have tried to help her son in the past. But she's bitter about the work of some local police officers.

"AT TIMES IT seemed like they were anxiously waiting for him to do something so they could arrest him, rather than trying to stop the crime from happening."

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