

The Pastor's Wife was a \$100-a-day Heroin Addict

It's true that I, a pastor's wife, was one time a drug addict, a \$100-a-day heroin mainliner, and a criminal's girl friend. My boy friend, Fred, was on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list. When Fred was arrested and sentenced to life plus 99 years, I continued to visit him at the penitentiary. Another of the men I went with was a bass player with Jimi Hendrix's band, and my picture is on ELECTRIC LADY, one of Hendrix's LP album covers (Jimi Hendrix was a top-rated hard rock musician who died of a drug overdose in 1970).

I wasn't looking for God nor did I think that I needed any kind of help. But when I was 23 years old, God came into my life and set me free from my addiction. I want to tell how it happened, but first, a little bit more about my life.

As a teenager, I found no answers in church and soon dropped out. By the time I was 18, I had discovered marijuana and alcohol, and I thought I was beginning to get some answers.

Then came my introduction to the unbelievable love drug, L.S.D. It sure made me love everybody! Anybody! It also introduced me to a whole new circle of friends, and they were awesome and beautiful. Somehow I always seemed to get attached to the criminal types. Now I was really living. With the sharp new awareness that L.S.D. furnished, I danced and partied all night and slept all day.

We partied with grass, barbiturates, amphetamines, cocaine, L.S.D., and every other synthetic heaven we could fly away to. Like the others, I wanted more and more, so it was that I started on heroin. Wow! At last I felt that I had made the big scene.

It was at this time in my life that I was introduced to the Jimi Hendrix Rock group. Many times we stayed in the studio over twelve hours, most of that time getting high. His death from a drug overdose in 1970 was one of the most devastating things in my life. One day he had everything; the next day he had nothing.

One time I became owner of a clothing boutique. My parents knew nothing about my drug addiction, and they financed it for me. I thought that now I would get off of heroin, but the more money I made, the more heroin I bought. Within a few months, I lost my business and all of my money. The only way I could survive was to start selling heroin — and then I knew I was in serious trouble. It became a day-to-day existence, and I was horribly scared.

Finally the day of my deliverance came. Here's how it happened: One day I went to a friend's murder trial. While at the courthouse, a friend in the jail saw me and yelled out, "Hey, Sandi, I want you to go to this rehab center and get this preacher to help me out."

So it was that I, a \$100-a-day heroin addict, went into a Christian rehab center. I was not looking for help, did not want any, and didn't even think I needed any. I was partying every night and I thought that was the life. I could not have imagined that that day would change my life forever.

In the rehab center, I said to someone, "I've got this friend who needs help...."

I was interrupted with, "Honey, you need help yourself." I was furious! Who was this square dude to think he could tell me I needed help? I thought I had everything. I had lots of friends, I drove a psychedelic car, partied every night, and I sure didn't want to be like one of those squares at the rehab center. Somebody told me God could help me if I would start mainlining Jesus instead of heroin. But I didn't see any way. However, when that man challenged me to check in and get some help, the challenge got me. I decided: "Everyone knows I'm on drugs. For their sake, I'll try it out."

At this center, I met some Christians who had real joy and peace. At first I wanted to know more about what they had. So when they convinced me to quit cold turkey, I tried it. But it was only 18 hours before I started getting horribly ill with the fiendish pangs of withdrawal. I started out to find a bag of dope. As I was going out, some of "those squares" cornered me and started praying for me. I thought, "My God, how square can you get? Well, at least I'll let them finish their prayer, then I'm going to get me a bag of dope."

Just about that time, an older grandmother walked up to me. She was so square that she wouldn't know a joint if you handed it to her, lit it for her, and smoked it for her; but she laid a hand on me and spoke forcefully: "You demon of drug addiction, I command you, in the name of Jesus Christ, come out of this girl."

From that moment on, I was no longer addicted to drugs. The only problem was that I didn't understand why I was so happy and felt so good! In the next few days I began to realize what had happened to me. When I realized that I no longer had the addiction, I backed away from drugs.

I went back to my old friends and tried to get back into my old lifestyle, but as I began to realize that I had been freed from my addiction

by Jesus Christ, I decided I ought to learn a little bit more about this Jesus. As soon as I tried to start following Jesus, my old friends dropped me like a hot potato.

So that's the story of how my new life in Jesus started. I was set free from my addiction without wanting it and without even knowing that I had been set free! When I said, "I don't need any help," actually I was deceived by the devil himself. Before I said those words, I had made five suicide attempts — and I said I didn't need any help! Once I had an abortion. Another time I made a spur-of-the-moment decision and joined the U.S. Marines; however, I didn't stay there long; I was discharged for getting pregnant. That's the way I was. If I met a virgin, I would say to her, "What are you waiting for?"

After the Lord set me free from drug addiction, I had a lot to learn about the life-style that Jesus wanted us to live. Once I went into a shop and picked out a dress to buy. It did not have a belt with it, so I conveniently "borrowed" a belt from another dress, put it with the dress, took it, and paid for the dress without paying for the belt. Now this may not seem like a big deal to some people, but God was teaching me his ways. My conscience troubled me until I knew what I had to do. I wrote the store owner a letter, told him what I had done, and mailed the belt back. Then I experienced true joy!

Again I went back to visit Fred in the penitentiary. But this time I told him about what had happened to me, and encouraged him to turn to Jesus for help. It just happened that Fred had a cellmate named Jack Murphy, better known as Murf the Surf. Jack told Fred, "You better get rid of that chick; she'll bring the heat on us."

But that didn't stop me. I told Jack that Jesus Christ had changed my whole life and I had been forgiven. Also, when I went to the penitentiary, I car-pooled with Jack's girl friend, Connie (we were living in Miami at the time, and we had to ride over seven hours to the penitentiary). I tried to share with Connie what Jesus had done for me, but she told Jack several times, "I don't know how much longer I can stand this 'Alleluia chick.'" They both laughed at me and mocked me, but I kept on riding with Connie and sharing my story with her.

Within six months, Jack Murphy turned to the Lord Jesus Christ and he and I both tried to get Connie to turn to Him also. That was twenty years ago. Now Jack is out of prison, is still living a strong, vibrant Christian life, and is going back into the prisons to share his story with the men there. He has written three books about how God changed his life. They are available from Chaplain Ray, Box 63, Dallas, TX 75221.

Within one year after the Lord set me free, I met and married my husband, Steve Fatow. Steve ministered to a small group in Miami, and this group eventually got a place to meet and evolved into a church. Later we pastored a church in Alabama and then in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Now I want to tell an incident that happened in Knoxville over 15 years after I left Jimi Hendrix's bass player. One day my phone rang and a girl's voice said, "Sandi, this is Denise Betancourt."

"DENISE!" I shouted into the phone. I couldn't believe my ears. Denise had been Jimi Hendrix's girl friend. At the time Hendrix died, Denise was heavy into drugs and 13 years later she overdosed.

This is what she told me: After she overdosed, she was taken to a Christian rehab center run by an outfit called Teen Challenge. There she was introduced to Jesus, and Jesus also changed her life. Oh, I'm sure the neighbors must have heard me shout for joy when I heard that over the long-distance phone call.

But let me tell the rest of what she told me: After she left the rehab center, she went to Miami and started attending a church. At the church some of the people told her about the former pastor and his wife, whose names were Steve and Sandi Fatow. Of course, at the time she did not know that Sandi Fatow was the same Sandi that she had known 15 years earlier when she was with Jimi Hendrix. However, the church people talked so much about Steve and Sandi, that one day she found out who Sandi was. I can just imagine it now: "What! Sandi Fatow is the same Sandi that was one time going with Jimi Hendrix's bass player? I can't believe it. Oh! I've got to call Sandi. Can you tell me where she is now? I want to call her."

She got my phone number in Knoxville and called me. The two of us who once did drugs together, were now together in Jesus. The two of us who were once destined for an eternity in hell, were now together in Jesus forever.

May His Holy Name be praised!

This story is also available in Spanish. Anyone wanting copies of this tract, please contact:

Brother James [printer]	or	Sandi Fatow
4912 Lancer Drive		c/o Trinity Chapel
Knoxville, TN 37921-3014		5830 Haynes-Sterchi Road
		Knoxville, TN 37912