

Hooked On Recovery

January 7, 2005

Razor Boy

I was cleaning the basement last weekend and came across a cardboard box of old CD's. They were like treasures. Some were 20 years old. I had no idea that CD's had been around that long. I grew up with vinyl. We used to take album covers and 'motor' them; spin them on our fingertips like the guy on the Ed Sullivan show who used to spin plates on long wooden dowels. Then I lived through 8-tracks and cassettes. And CD's. I have yet to venture into the world of MP3 players and all that stuff, maybe I'm just getting tired of adapting.

One evening this last week, the whole family sat down and sorted through our music. We have one of those carousels that holds 200 CD's and we weren't sure what we had in there. Along with all those CD's, I brought up the box from the basement. We ended up creating a playlist in a Word table, so we can sort by carousel number, title and artist. Joshua and Samantha were intrigued with names like Pink Floyd, Grand Funk and Little Feat. They thought I Robot was from the Will Smith movie and not the Alan Parsons Project. Matthew wanted to listen to the Lion King.

What got me thinking were all the Steely Dan albums: Can't Buy a Thrill, Countdown to Ecstasy, Pretzel Logic, Katy Lied, The Royal Scam, Aja. These songs brought me back and brought me back powerfully and immediately to a time before recovery. My program of recovery tells me that I should not regret the past nor should I shut the door on it. powerfully. At first I was more than a little uncomfortable, but then I found out something. The music I liked then, I still like today. Granted I love listening to other music today and spend most of my listening time devoted to my new taste. However, it opened a door to an insight (one that I have had before, but have forgotten many times). Not everything in my pre-recovery days was dark, not everything a source of shame, not everything was bad. It's just not that simple, the line is not that clear. I had strengths and assets and interests that carried over into recovery. I guess I have always known that, but this music thing reinforced the idea.

One song in particular (and not a real popular one) used to ring in my head back in the day. And lo and behold, it still rings today. It's the second track on the Countdown to Ecstasy album, Razor Boy. The line that repeats over and over is,

*"Will you still have a song to sing when the Razor Boy comes and takes your fancy things away?
Will you still be singing it on that cold and windy day?"*

I have always interpreted the Razor Boy to be cocaine, now I could be completely wrong here, but it's my interpretation. The song was true then. I knew deep down the Razor Boy was coming to take my fancy things away – and he did. And the answer to the question posed in the song is, "No, I no longer had a song to sing". I wasn't singing at all on that cold and windy day over 17 years ago. Today, those lines from a classic Steely Dan song serve warning that the Razor Boy has not gone away, he's still out there. And he'll do the same thing he did before; take my things and my song. I steer clear of the Razor Boy. I give him a very wide berth. Today, my song is far too precious to lose again.

Hooked on Recovery is a biweekly message from CCAR Executive Director Phillip Valentine, person in recovery since 12/28/87, devoted husband, now a father of five and just another surf fisherman. These thoughts, views and opinions reflect on his personal recovery and are not meant in any way to speak for the entire recovery community. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him at phillip@ccar.us. Visit the website at www.ccar.us to read the entire series.