

now. So that definitely changed the way I was looking at things. Then last May, May 21st I was up at the VA just dropping some papers off and I started to feel not right, so I went to the emergency room and I said 'I don't feel right, something's wrong.' and they said what do you think it is, and I said 'I don't know, but something's wrong. It's not the flu, it's not a tummy ache, there's something wrong.' So they looked at my chart and they saw my history, that I ended up there a lot with my liver issues, so they said well we're not going to take any chances, we need to find out [what's wrong.]

So I was in the room with the nurse, she was going through the questions, blood pressure check and everything, and I told her — I looked at her and I said 'I think I'm going to be sick,' and she took out a plastic tub about two inches tall, three wide, she put that on the table and she said, 'Well if you're gonna be sick, just throw up in that thing, don't worry about it.' I said ok, and I started to throw up and I filled that thing full of blood, to the top. I had an artery or something that went around my stomach and liver, it had burst and I was hemorrhaging out of control. She saw that, and then I passed out. That's the last I remember for three days.

It took nine pints of blood to bring me back. I bled out. I was already dead. I was already in the emergency room, that's the only reason I came back like I did. I was in the hospital for a month — I was in a coma for a week and a half. Most of that was medically induced because there were so many things going on. I had a respiratory failure, they say that according to my chart, I died three times while I was under. So, when I got out of there I started getting my head back. The chaplain had come in, I knew her, and she was already giving me last rites. As far as they're concerned, doctors still look at my chart today and say "we don't know how you got here that day, let alone how you survived it." So one day when I was starting to get better and my head was starting to get to where I could think again, she came in and I was talking with her and I said to her 'One of the things that's bothering me is,' I said, 'I survived that suicide thing, and I survived this,' and it was starting to come together how serious that was, I said, 'do you think I'll ever be able to answer "why?" Why I survived?' and she said 'You may never get the answer to "why" you survived, but perhaps you're asking the wrong question. Instead of asking the question "why did you survive" the question might be "what are you going to with the time you were given?"' And that's why the idea of the project I call "From the Darkness" stepped out — I was allowed, despite all of the drinking and all of the trouble, I was allowed to come out of the darkness. Maybe this was why. It's been a ride.

TCP: Do you hope this program will eventually spread outside of Clackamas?

Doust: I hope so. Yeah, because the problem is everywhere, but Clackamas might be the place to say 'hey, let's give this a try.' A different university could look at this and say 'we like this and this and this and this, we're going to change a little here,' so each university has own version of the program.

Again, it's the students that do it. The students that own it.

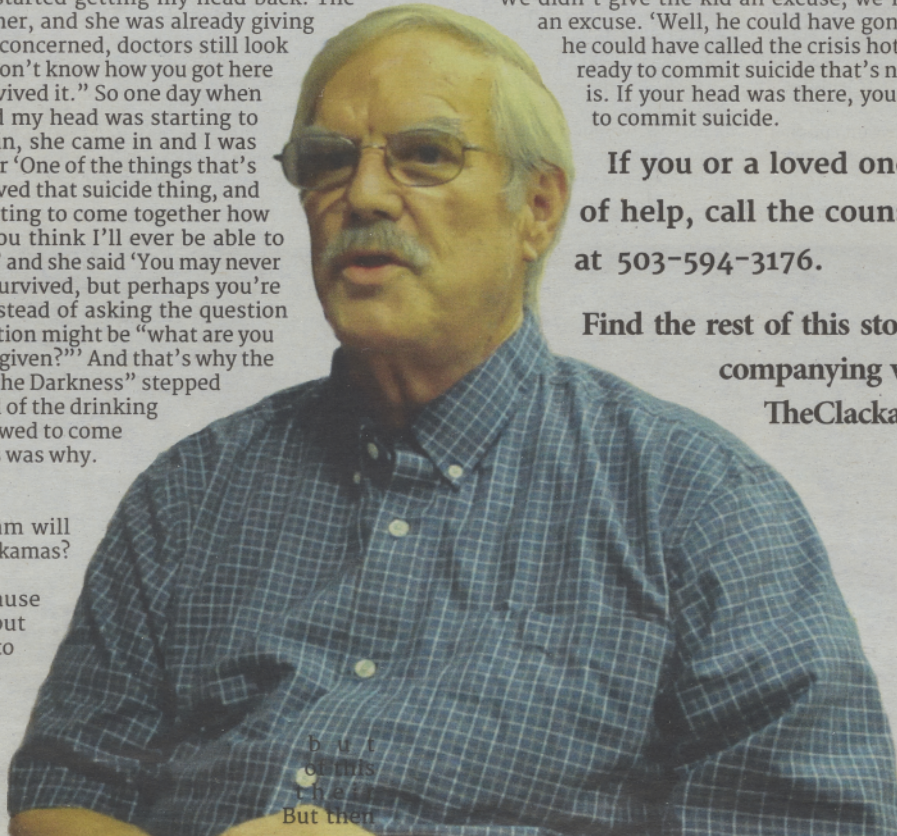
TCP: Do you feel like our counselors here are effectively handling the issue, or is there more that can be done, and this program will segue into better care for these students?

Doust: I think our counselors handle this issue great. I've seen them professionally several times, but the problem is they don't know who and where the trouble is. That's what I want to try to work with the students on so that when the students see something then there's a mechanism — some kind of a pathway that they can follow to the counseling department, or something and say 'Hey, my friend has changed and I'm worried about them,' because this notion of someone committing suicide and everyone saying they could have called the crisis line, or they could have done this, they could have done that — it's too late for that. They'd already decided that they were going to do it because when I attempted suicide in 2010, I really, looking back, realized that the trouble was that I was at total peace with that choice. At that point I didn't care about calling that suicide line, or the county help, or anyone. I wasn't going to call anybody, I had already made the choice and was at peace with that. So now it was just a matter of getting the pills and the vodka. And that's what I see. We all want to feel good so we say, 'Well we had this program, this person fell through the cracks,' or 'This person, every person was a unique case.' There's an excuse. We give ourselves an excuse.

We didn't give the kid an excuse, we're giving ourselves an excuse. 'Well, he could have gone to the counselor, he could have called the crisis hotline.' When you're ready to commit suicide that's not where your head is. If your head was there, you wouldn't be ready to commit suicide.

If you or a loved one are in need of help, call the counseling center at 503-594-3176.

Find the rest of this story and the accompanying video online at TheClackamasPrint.com



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