

Finding peace beyond prison, and the words to express the lessons inside

BY SUE ZALOKAR
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Jason Breedlove comes from the block, literally. His writing comes from the heart, and is written about his experiences of being in prison after getting popped for selling methamphetamines in the Midwest during the height of the meth epidemic that ravaged many rural and urban environments in middle America.

Last month, Breedlove read at the annual Smallpressapalooza at Powell's City of Books. He was promoting his second book titled after his prison number, "1065131," which chronicles his three stays in the Clarinda Correctional Facility in Des Moines, Iowa.

Sue Zalokar: *In the book you talk about prison being a place where your mind is free, while in society you feel it is the other way around. Can you talk a little bit about this?*

Jason Breedlove: In prison, you don't have to think about "what am I going have for lunch?" or "when am I going to have lunch?" It's all thought out for you. There were things I looked forward to in the day, like mail or going out to the weight yard. I would think okay, I'm going to do my chest today, and this is my goal today. But I didn't have to make any decisions about my day. Mail came when it came. It was beyond my control. It's like your whole day is thought out for you, and so my mind would just roam free.

Also, in prison, I had tons of social contacts, but every time I am free in society, I feel isolated socially from the people around me. I find I'm angry a lot, and I have anti-social tendencies. I think a lot of that is because I don't have a lot of social interactions with people. In prison there are thousands of friends all around me.

In prison my mind is free. Everything is thought out for you. You're just there. A big part of everyone's day on the outside is travel. Out here I'm free, but it seems like I don't have enough time to think.

Inside you are around all these guys all the time. The guys on your unit are a part of your day, all day long. It's like a family, I

guess. Out here I'm in the city, and I'm surrounded by people, but I don't know any of them.

S.Z.: *In the book, based upon your own experiences, you say that by aggressively addressing criminality in society we would have less people in prisons. Would that really work?*

J.B.: I know from my own experience. I have sold drugs thousands of times. I've only been caught three times.

I sold meth daily, all day every day. There was no sleeping. I have no meth charges on my criminal record. I know that the chances are that I could go get a bag for somebody today and sell it to them and not get caught. But, I also know me, and I'd want to do it again and again. Pretty soon it would become part of my lifestyle again. Eventually, you always get caught.

S.Z.: *When did the desire to write first strike you?*

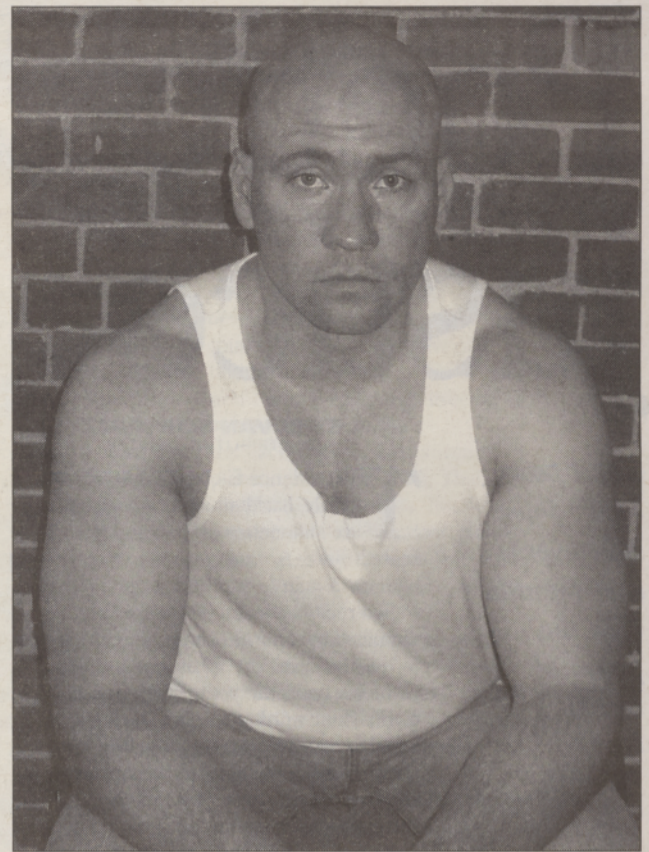
J.B.: It was in 2001 during my second incarceration, that I started writing poetry. Out of the poetry came one-liners that eventually I made into an annual desk calendar of daily inspirational sayings.

S.Z.: *Would you say that the corrections experience has corrected you?*

J.B.: I wouldn't say I'm fixed. They taught me that in treatment. You never have it beat. It's just a one-day-at-a-time kind of a thing. And if one day at a time is too much, you can always back it up to one hour, or a minute at a time.

S.Z.: *Do you do any work with prison populations today?*

J.B.: I am getting together with a friend of mine, Joseph Boyd. He is part of the social justice program at the Unitarian Church. We are putting together a public presentation to talk to students about prisons. He's going to tell his story and I'm going to tell my story. The focus will be



Jason Breedlove

geared toward family and the impact incarceration has on family.

S.Z.: *How is the book doing so far?*

J.B.: It's doing quite a bit better than the first book. "MycellF: Prisoner of the Penn" is more bullet points. It's funny, but it's not what people want when they sit down and read.

I did the first book and I loved it and all the ideas in it, well, because they were mine. But after it was out, maybe not even a month, I decided I was going to do the second book because people want a story.

S.Z.: *What's next for Jason Breedlove?*

J.B.: I'm writing fiction. I'm working on a collection of short stories. There will be seven stories in the book and they're all pretty grim. One of the stories is out now. It's in a little pamphlet (being sold at) Reading Frenzy, called "The Junkie Manifesto."

Lucy's Table

Have a great meal,
support a great cause

Thursday, May 5th

Enjoy lunch, dinner, or drinks at
Lucy's Table and 10% goes to JOIN!

More info at www.joinpdx.com

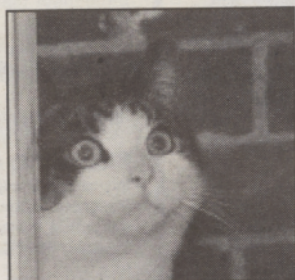


JOIN

Supporting the efforts
of homeless people to
transition into
permanent housing.

Connecting the street to a home

REGIONAL
GREEN BUILDING
HOTLINE
WWW.BUILDGREEN411.COM
503 823 5431
GREENHOTLINE@PORTLANDOREGON.GOV



Office Cat Rooty sends a big thank you to the folks at PAW Team for looking out for him with health cat food. Thank you, PAW Team!