



PHOTO: REUTERS/ANDREW WINNING

Ozzy Osbourne

A letter to my younger self

BY JANE GRAHAM
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Ozzy Osbourne – the infamous lead singer of heavy metal pioneers Black Sabbath – penned a letter to his younger self as part of a series for Street Roots sister paper, the Big Issue UK. He shares it with readers, as told to Jane Graham.

I was a rebellious kid. I didn't like commitment, I couldn't hold a job down. I was always being yelled at by my mother for not bringing any money into the house. I was a bit of a drifter really. I left home but I didn't really have anywhere to go. I used to doss around on people's couches. I was a bit of a social butterfly in a working class environment.

I'm extremely dyslexic but they didn't understand then what dyslexia was. I went to school, a secondary modern in Birmingham, where there were 49 kids in a class, all boys. The kids used to mess around, smoking behind the toilets. It wasn't the best if you wanted to be taught anything. I was the crazy guy. I made the big tough guys like me by making them laugh.

I tried to find things I was good at. I tried a bit of burglary, but I was no good at that.

Fucking useless. I didn't do any major burglary jobs. It was less than three weeks before I got caught. My dad said to me, that was very stupid. And I did feel very stupid. I didn't pay my fine and I got put in jail for a few weeks. That was a short sharp lesson. It certainly curbed my career in burglary.

Someone recently asked me what the best gift I ever got was, and it suddenly dawned on me that if my father hadn't bought me a microphone when I was 18, I definitely wouldn't be here now. He saw that I was really interested in popular music. My bedroom wall was covered in pictures of the Beatles. Anything with the word

'Beatles' on it was on my wall. So he bought me a microphone and it was shortly after that I met the guys who would become Sabbath. It was the fact that I had my own microphone and PA system that got me in

the band. If I hadn't had them I would never have got the gig.

First it was just me and Geezer (Butler, Black Sabbath bassist). We put an ad up in a music shop in Birmingham and Tony and Bill turned up (Iommi and Ward, guitarist and drummer). They'd just been busted for

smoking dope in Carlisle with their band Mythology. It all fell apart because back then a drug bust was major news up and down the country. Now they just give you a kicking. Tony's face fell when he saw me, he didn't like me. He was like, 'Oh no'. But we started jamming. Tony had a reputation in Cumberland as it was called then, so we got

some gigs there. And in Inverness, just over the border in Scotland.

The teenage Ozzy would never believe, not in a million years, that he could have the life I've had. How did that kid get from living

in Aston, Birmingham to a house in Beverly Hills, California? I don't understand it. I'll never forget one Christmas Eve, my dad said I could stay up late for a treat, and I would see the most beautiful woman in the world. And later he put on the TV and it was Elizabeth Taylor, reading a poem. The woman my dad thought was the most beautiful woman in the world. Years later I was invited to some charity do and who was I sitting next to – Elizabeth Taylor. I just thought, ohh, if my dad could only see me now. It was amazing. Unbelievable.

What would surprise the younger Ozzy most would be that he'd stayed alive this long. I wasn't a violent person but I did some very stupid things in my life. I could have killed myself a thousand times before I even got a microphone in my hand. I had some crazy years with drugs and alcohol in the seventies and eighties. For about twenty years I was drinking a lot of booze and doing a lot of drugs and living the lifestyle. Then it stopped working for me so I had to get some help. Now I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't do drugs. But I'm definitely living on borrowed time.

Looking back, I feel very very lucky. I'm 65 and I've had a great life. There's something bigger than me, I must be here for some reason. I still do stupid things. But I don't get in my car drunk any more. I used to say to Sharon, I won't do that. Then I'd have a few drinks and wake up the next morning and she'd say, what did you want to go and do that for? But I'm clear headed these days. Though, typical of me – I've fallen downstairs, fallen out of windows all through my career, no big deal. But when I fell off my Quad bike about 10 years on my property in England, I broke my neck. I was going about four miles an hour. Typical. One day I'll be going for a walk and a rare bird will fly over, take a dump with a rare virus in it on my shoulder, and I'll disappear.

I wouldn't give anyone any advice about anything. Especially my younger self. If you asked me to help you out with something I actually knew about – which isn't much to be perfectly honest – I might give a suggestion. But I'd say, if you want to try something, go ahead but remember every action has a reaction. It's like gambling. I don't understand gambling addicts because it doesn't work. I've been to Vegas, I've had a few gos on the one-armed bandits and I just don't get the thrill. Driving at 90 miles an hour when you're drunk – that's a stupid thing to do. Though I've done it a thousand times myself.

Do I feel ashamed of things I've done? Every day. The last time I got loaded I came back minus a Ferrari. I'm lucky to have Sharon in my life because Sharon has given me proper telling offs that I sometimes used to resent. I'd think, why is she so down on me, I'm alright now. But there were times I wasn't all right, and I plagued everybody. I was crazy.

If I could live one day of my life over again it would be the day I got married to my wife Sharon. I was off my face and I didn't make it to the bedroom suite. They found me face-down in the hotel corridor unconscious. I'd like to go back to that day and go to bed with my wife.

Street News Service

Thank you for giving a hand up in Portland and supporting your neighborhood vendor!