

Cocaine, The Most Deadly and Addictive Drug Today

by Jerry Garner

The recent deaths of University of Maryland Basketball player Len Bias and Cleveland Brown's defensive back Don Rodgers, by cocaine intoxication has brought to focus the growing number of cocaine abusers in the United States.

Indeed, cocaine has become the most glamorous, seductive, destructive and dangerous drug in the 1980's. Last year, 563 deaths were attributed to cocaine, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. There are several factors for the increase in cocaine use in America.

To begin with, the U.S. Government has failed to stop the flow of cocaine into the U.S. from other countries such as Bolivia, Columbia, and Peru. Secondly, the reduction in cocaine prices two years ago has resulted in a cocaine glut, making it more available to individuals from the lower social-economic class to purchase the illicit drug. Especially a form of cocaine called crack.

According to law enforcement authorities, Crack first appeared in New York inner-city communities three years ago. Crack is white pellets of prepackaged cocaine in its purest form. The use of Crack has reached epidemic proportions. Not only is Crack popular, it is also dangerous. It has been called the most addictive drug known to humans. For some individuals who use Crack, it has become instantaneous

addiction, whereas if you snort cocaine, it can take two to five years before addiction sets in.

Crack is smoked in a pipe (the procedure is referred to as free-basing). When an individual "free-bases", the cocaine is absorbed by the small blood vessels in the lungs, moves to the left side of the heart, and then goes directly to the brain in less than eight seconds. This triggers a rush of adrenaline, at the same time the cocaine blocks the body's normal ability to reabsorb that adrenaline. The rush overworks the heart, and sometimes short-circuits the sensitive wiring of the brain, confusing the signals being sent to the heart. In some cases, this could lead to cardiac arrest.

According to the Multnomah County Coroner's Office, four persons in Oregon have died this year from cocaine related deaths. However, this figure may be misleading. In many drug related deaths there is often more than one drug found in the victims system. When this is the case, the drug with the greatest quantity is given as cause of death.

Despite the dangers associated with cocaine, the use of Crack is gaining popularity from coast to coast. Portland isn't excluded from the wrath of this glamorous and dangerous drug. Residents living in the Albina, King, and Elliott neighborhoods have complained repeat-

edly over the years about drug trafficking in their communities. The upsurge in Crack use has added to their problems.

According to Lt. Chuck Karl, head of the Portland Police Bureau Narcotics Unit, there are more than 100 drug houses operating in Northeast Portland. Karl said the police were running into more and more drug houses that are dealing in Crack. Crack happens to be one of the most dangerous drugs in society now because of its potency and tremendous addictive qualities. Many who are users of Crack and other illicit drugs are involved in prostitution, robbery, and burglary. "The drug problem isn't just a Northeast problem, it is a city-wide situation," said Karl. Lt. Karl and acting Chief Tobin said they will use the resources at their disposal to try to make an impact on drug trafficking in the City.

In an attempt to deal with the Crack problem in Portland, Congressman Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, is proposing legislation that would increase penalties for possession of "Crack". "We've got to beef up the penalties against the use of cocaine. Right now, the penalties are non-existent for Crack dealers."

Wyden and Rep. Dio Guardi, R-N.Y., have introduced a bill in the U.S. Congress that, if passed, would place harsh penalties on cocaine dealers in possession of 100 grams of cocaine or one gram of Crack.

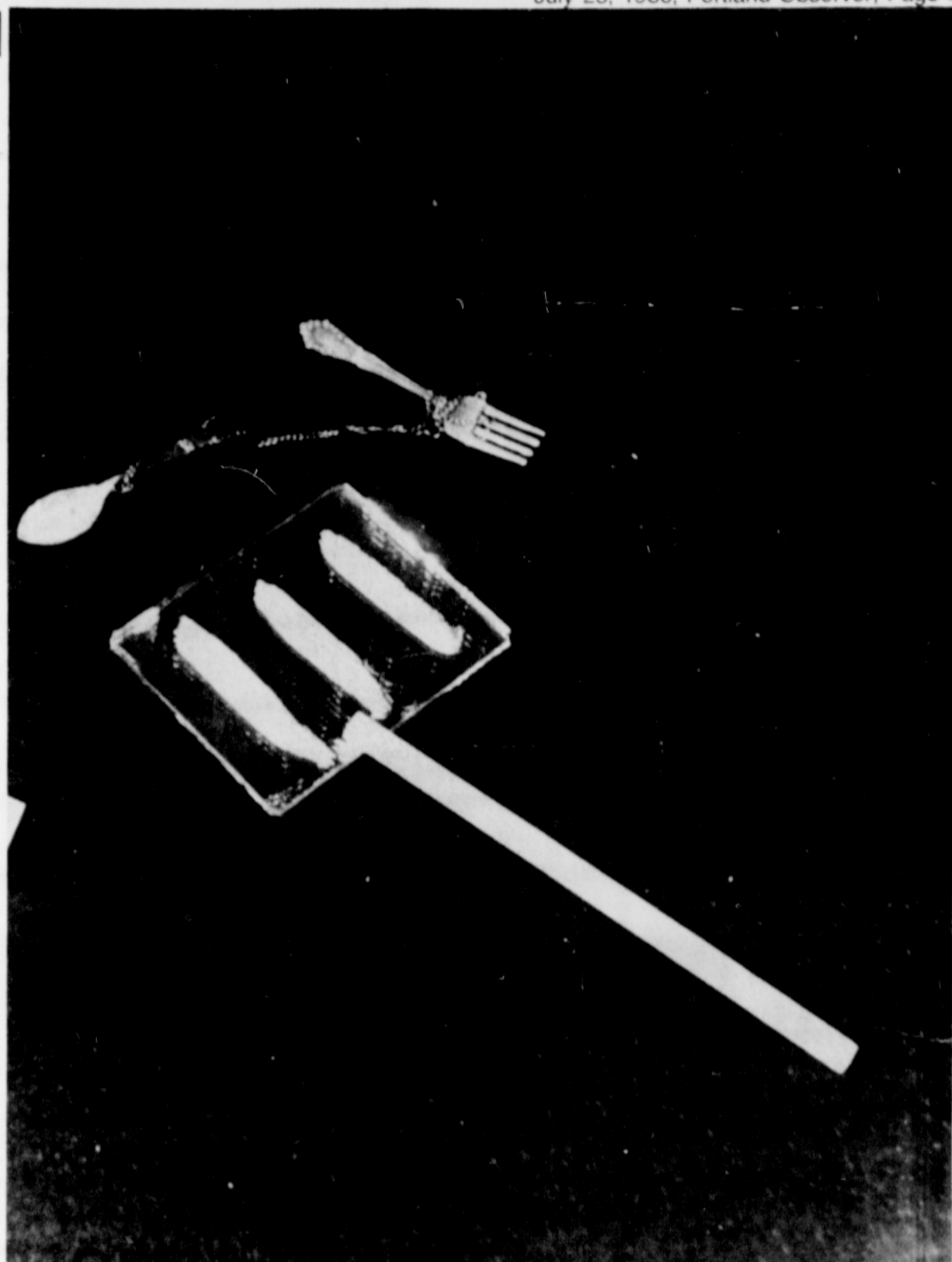


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How To Pick Up

The Pieces After A

Personal

Loss

People who suffer the loss of a loved one need to work through bereavement in their own ways. Yet grief is less prolonged when a person is able to mourn openly. What is crucial is that some kind of action release the pain.

Here are some ways to hasten the healing process:

- **Talk with trusted friends.** The company of others provides solace as well as a means for releasing emotions. Self-imposed isolation only makes matters worse.

- **Remain active.** Work, especially, has a therapeutic value. Living up to responsibilities to others will help you discover inner strength. If you must remain at home, try to follow a schedule—do the laundry, shop for groceries. Physical activity can be very restoring to heart and soul.

- **Help other.** Doing something for others, even while you are hurting, will help you to respect yourself.

- **Indulge yourself.** Do things that make you feel good. Take a warm bath at bedtime, set the table attractively, buy a bouquet of flowers—such small acts of self-caring can be helpful at times of duress.

- **Find a group to join.** After the initial shock has begun to wear off, look into group activities at your community center, local college, church or synagogue.

When ignored or denied, grief can do harm in countless ways. Facing loss is the key to recovery.

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