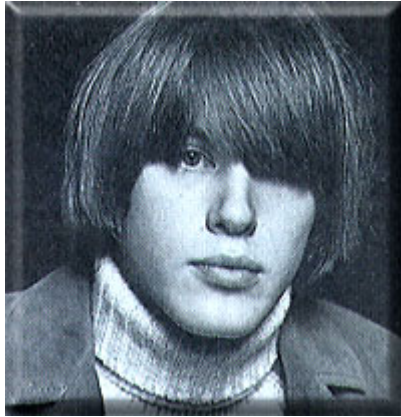


Dear Young Friends,



You don't know me, but I am in the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame. I was the drummer for "The Byrds." We were almost as popular as "The Beatles." Back in the 60's everyone knew who we were. Your parents will remember, I was a famous rock 'n roll superstar. My band performed for millions all over the world. Our songs, "Mr. Tambourine Man," "Eight Miles High" and "Turn, Turn, Turn" are still played constantly on the radio. Our concerts were often sold out. I made a lot of money and had everything going for me including a problem I want to share with you. I was a drunk. Alcohol killed me on December 19, 1993 when I was only 47 years old. It's embarrassing to have to share with you my stupidity that resulted in my death. But you need to know that what happened to me can happen to you. Honestly, it can. Dying of alcoholism is not an easy death. You have a right to know the truth. Really, you need to know the whole truth.



Don't stop reading my letter yet. What I am about to tell you is real serious. It is no lie. It is time for you to be told the facts of drinking too much beer, wine or distilled spirits. You need to know the facts about the horrible death I suffered and the excruciating pain and embarrassment I went through at the end. I did not die of too many drugs like coke or pot. I died of too much alcohol which is really the most lethal drug of all. Trust me, this is no joke.

When I died I weighed only about 34 Kilos. I had been a great looking teenager and handsome man who was 1.9metres tall and my normal weight was 80 kilos. I was a real lady's man and women loved me when I was healthy, but right before I died I was a horrible mess. My face was unrecognisable to my family and friends. You would have shuddered from the sight of me, I looked like a walking skeleton. I was so weak, I couldn't even smile.



The "Ed Sullivan Performance, 1965"

I started drinking alcohol when I was 14 years old and until two weeks before I died, I could hardly remember ever being sober again. Sometimes when I was drunk I was mean. I am sure some of my friends

could no longer stand me. I am lucky I did not kill anyone driving drunk and wind up in prison. For years, I would drink a 2 litre bottle of vodka almost every day and while I was performing I would drink beer on stage in between songs. When I was young I did not care about what would happen when I got older and just kept drinking, but believe me, when you grow up you want to live a full life. I know I did, but I robbed myself of about 30 years that I could have had fun with my fame and money and I cheated my son out of having his father. Please believe me when I say, "I wish I had never taken the first drink. I wish I was alive today."

I got hooked, that's right hooked on alcohol. It is addictive just like crack cocaine and many people like myself find it impossible to stop. We are called "alcoholics." And for people who start and get hooked and cannot stop, it is a fatal disease and can lead to other serious problems like teenage pregnancy, child abuse, crime and premature accidental death. Alcohol is more harmful than all the other illegal drugs combined. I know you can get it easily; I did. But don't be stupid like me. Too many beers or other alcoholic beverages can ruin your life. If you get hooked you may not finish school and get a good job, you may lose your health and friends and family. I did other drugs too, but none like alcohol. Alcohol is so addictive that I warn you if you get hooked you may not be able to stop by yourself or even if you get help. It is that powerful.



Right before I died, my liver disintegrated inside my body. You could see pieces of it breaking off in my guts with a special type of x-ray picture taken called a sonogram. When I died my liver was the size of a fifty pence piece. My pancreas and kidneys were also affected by my drinking. Because I destroyed my liver with alcohol,

my wastes had no way to leave my body and as a result my testicles

swelled up to the size of a basketball. You can't even imagine how painful they were. It was like someone took a sledge hammer and hit them about 1000 times and wouldn't stop. My chest, stomach and legs swelled up so huge I was the size of a sumo wrestler. I could hardly move. My eyes turned yellow and my skin was discoloured from the toxic wastes in my body. I had to go to the hospital so the doctors could drain the poisonous fluid from my abdomen to keep me from exploding. They inserted a catheter into my bladder through my urethra to draw off the urine into a plastic bag attached to my leg with an elastic strap. I screamed with the pain. I lost all my dignity and there was nothing more they could do to save me, so they sent me home to face death.

All of my vital organs stopped functioning and my body started to shrivel from the inside. The pain was so unbearable that even the morphine they gave me didn't help. I couldn't eat and I felt nauseated all the time. They gave me suppositories for the nausea but they did no good at all. I knew I was soon going to die. Believe me when the end comes, it is not like you think. I didn't want to go. Two weeks later I died. Before I died I made my soul mate, Susan Paul, promise me to get this message to you. Please, please I say to you with tears in my eyes, say no to alcohol the worst drug of all and if you already have a problem with it, plead with your parents, your doctor or friends to get you help.

If you are drinking at your age you are abusing alcohol. Let me warn you that you face a crisis in your life. You might live to be 47 like me and then die a nightmarish death like I did, or you could be killed or disfigured today in an alcohol related crash. And if you drink too much alcohol in one sitting, alcohol poisoning will shut down your breathing and you will die.

God Bless you all,

With all my love,
Michael Clarke
Drummer for The Byrds





MICHAEL JAMES DICK
AKA Michael Clarke
Born June 3, 1946 Died December 19, 1993

This last photo of Michael was taken by his mother, Suzy Dick, just hours before his death. It was Michael's wish to let all children across the world see what happened to him as the result of developing an addiction to alcohol as a teenager. He hoped that this might help them make the right choices.