

Soul searching foot traveller shares story about second chances

Emily Clingman, Editor | Posted: Friday, June 26, 2015 3:03 pm

Remember when your pop, or maybe a coach, told you to, “walk it off,” when you got hurt playing around?

Chris Bailey has taken that idea to heart at a much deeper level. On a foot journey from California to New York, the 33-year-old free spirit is literally walking away from a past of poor choices and pain. A year ago, he was not so free.

Addicted to methamphetamine and alcohol, alone in a park homeless with nothing left, one night a police street sweep found him running away in a panic. In the dark, Chris fell over an embankment, bleeding profusely and fading in and out of consciousness.

He remembers asking God, How did I end up here and how am I going to get out? How am I going to get free?

Twin brother, Bobby, in a video recently created to tell Chris’ story, talked about his brother being his best friend, building forts together as kids, always using their imagination together.

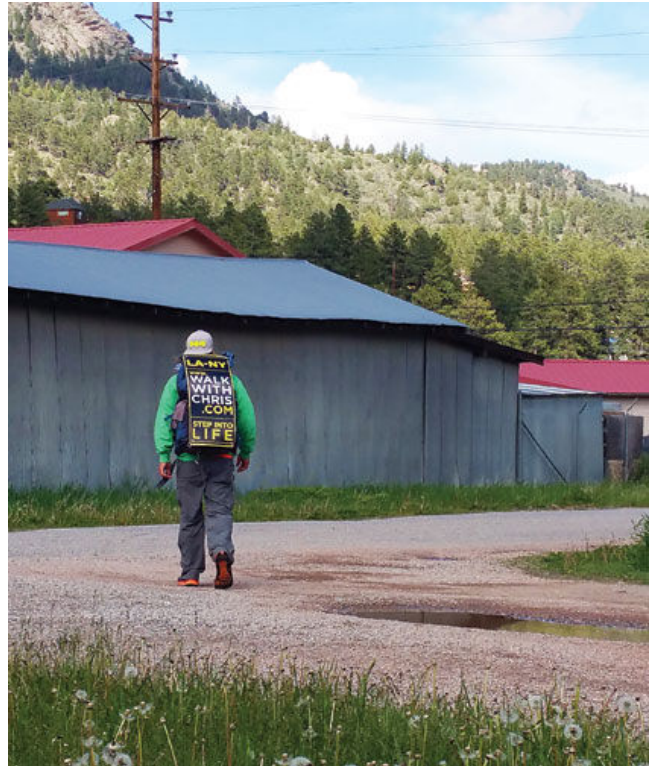
The last time he really did anything with Chris was in high school.

After winning a quirky dance contest on a national level, they drifted apart.

“His journey was a lot different than mine,” Bobby says in the video.

Chris appears on the screen talking about being 17 years old and finding no comfort in living daily life without drugs and alcohol.

“So I isolated myself, so they (his loved ones and friends) didn’t have to see me like that.”



Walking it off

Chris Bailey, a recovering methamphetamine addict, decided to walk from California to New York as part of his healing process. Three months into his trip, on June 12, he stopped in Bailey to visit his namesake town and share his story with The Flume. He is shown here continuing his foot journey, with Mount Bailey as a backdrop. (Photo by Emily Clingman/The Flume)

He talks of having suicidal thoughts and feeling like nothing mattered.

After that night of the wipe-out, Chris, beat up with 10 stitches in his head, felt like he couldn't call his family.

Meanwhile, brother Bobby has been praying about Chris, wanting to help, but unable to reach him, unaware of where he was at.

Then, one day he got in the car and went looking for him ... vaguely.

“There was someone, something guiding me. I took a right, then took a left,” Bobby says in the video.

He eventually came up on a high school park in a neighborhood that he never travels through, had never been there in his entire life, and suddenly he sees Chris sitting in the bleachers.

“It was a dude that I remember,” Bobby said. “It was my brother.”

Chris chimes in the conversation in the video.

“To my amazement, I look up, and I see my twin, my brother.

“It was such a good moment,” Chris chokes out, with tears in his eyes. I just felt so much joy.”

The story goes like this – they rode out eight days together in a motel room while Chris got clean.

“I've never seen such courage,” Bobby says in the video.

Chris made it through a week of grueling detox, then admitted himself into a substance abuse rehab facility for a few months, then into a halfway house for good measure.

While walking to and from AA meetings, a few times a day sometimes, Chris was finding that the solitude and rhythm of walking was instrumental in settling his thoughts and emotions.

He realized that sitting around dwelling on overwhelming hopelessness and negativity created a snowball effect. He found those thoughts dissipated with walking.

One day, he put in about 15 miles of foot travel and the thought occurred to him to keep walking ... across the country.

On March 14 of this year, Chris took his first step toward his new life and started walking east from Los Angeles.

Fast forward to June 12 when Chris walked into The Flume just before 5 p.m. on a lazy summer afternoon, and told me his story.

He had walked millions of steps so far, averaging 25 to 30 miles a day. As he was walking through Colorado, he heard of the town Bailey and decided that he had to check out his namesake town.

How lucky I was that this “story” walked right into my office.

An hour later, I realized that Chris' drop-in was a genuine inspiration to me and I felt more than lucky to have crossed paths with this courageous and dedicated beast.

The interaction went something like this:

Him: "Hi, I'm Chris and I'm walking from LA to New York because I was a meth addict and now I'm clean and ... here, do you want to watch a video?"

Me: "Um, sure," entertaining the thought that a real-life Forrest Gump was in my presence. I can be dreadfully superficial sometime, I admit.

10 minutes later, I was crying. As explained above, Chris Bailey's story is outrageous – 15 years of hard partying, eventually winding up in a ditch, half bleeding to death. Addiction is a nightmare that few escape from. In fact, some of the tears that escaped me were for people I know in my own life that are stuck viciously in the grips of substance abuse. How does one break free?

Sporting a green Bailey, Colorado hoodie that he just scored from the Knotty Pine, and the biggest infectious grin in world, Chris and I sat outside in the setting sun and talked about the significance of walking it off.

"Fitness is the number one aspect that should be incorporated into substance abuse rehabilitation," he said. "There's got to be a replacement for that endorphin craving drug addicts have."

He said that walking is meditative, which is crucial to recovery because, "there needs to be a space between those racing thoughts."

Chris also said that his body needed a physical shock, something extreme, to overcome the hopelessness. An extraordinary change needed to happen.

As a former trainer with L.A. Fitness and a college football player years ago, Chris understands the benefits of physical activity so walking across the country is way to reconnect with that awareness.

To those of us in the we- andwould-never-walk-across-the-country camp, the obvious question presents itself – doesn't it suck to be walking day after day after day for like ... ever?

"Sure," he said. "It was 105 degrees in Arizona a while back and you know, finding a place to set up a tent in the rain presents some discomfort," he said. "And, a lot of people mistake me for being homeless (with his long hair and oversized, weathered backpack), but it's menial compared to the overall life changing experience."

He talked about the interaction with others along the way.

"There's so much love," Chris said. "People want to be a part of it. I've been given food and water. People have invited me into their homes."

The gift of inspiration goes both ways in his eyes.

So, he keeps walking, with joy in his heart and an appreciation for little blessings along the way. He recently posted a photo on Instagram of two purple milk thistle flowers in an open field along the highway in rural Colorado.

“Enough said,” the caption read.

While this journey across America and through the roads in his heart will take many more months, Chris is already placing himself into the future. He’s developing a fitness program for recovering addicts and posts daily inspirational updates on social media for his followers

At last check, Chris was still gallivanting through Colorado, out of the mountains and into to the open plains.

“I’m glad I almost died,” Chris told me before he walked away from The Flume a few weeks ago.

“My life is just now beginning.”

To learn more about Chris Bailey, go to www.walkwithchris.com. To follow his cross-country trek, find him on Instagram:

[trindailywithbailey](#)