

Do Drugs Poison Our Veins Or Does The Paranoia Of Drugs Poison Our Veins?

by Steve T-Berry Young

I sit her amidst paper galore, finishing up my personal business stuff from the Spring. The old checks and receipts some how have surfed-up through the Summer piles of paper. Unfortunately several pieces of paper just won't go away; they keep turning up even if I throw them away. What could be so interesting to tug at my heart and soul, and cause me to toss-and-turn at night murmuring words that won't go away?

For years rumors have been flying around about drug testing, and now it's going to happen, yet luckily enough it hasn't—till now. As I write, our neighbors on the other side of the concrete valve are getting used to a drug free work place with, you guessed it, "the testing". That "drug free" environment is spreading our way and quickly. Both Canyonlands National Park and Dinosaur National Monument are presenting a Prospectus this year. For folks who don't know what a Prospectus is, in a nut shell, is the rules and bureaucratic hoops an outfitter has to follow to be a concessionaire within the Federal agency's jurisdiction. This new Prospectus, that is being issued, is of the same generation that started the Grand Canyon drug testing. Nobody has seen the Prospectus yet, but the Canyonlands issue will most likely have language about drugs.

A system that tested guides after a significant accident is something expected—it makes sense. Now we are faced with a system that a guide has to prove their innocence before they go to work. What happened to this country? I thought we were innocent until proven guilty? Doesn't the Bill of Rights protect us from laws and paranoias like this; or did all my teachers and professors get together to create a conspiracy just for me? What is the magic number of hoops we citizens have to jump through to realize that our lives and well beings are similar to our fore-fathers before the separation from England? Doesn't it seem that we are slowly giving up the rights our fore-fathers fought to get us so long ago?

Looking at this thing from a narrowed and dark perspective I see that everyone in the transportation business is doing this and has been doing this for some time. We are one of the last ones on the line; everyone before us bent over with a fight and took it. The river profession is expected to do as well. If we are considered to be in the transportation industry, why not treat us more like an industry before regulating us as one? Like maybe affordable health insurance and work benefits accessible for seasonal employees. The people who think drug testing is needed should focus their efforts on problems we have, not perceived problems. Create affordable health care and benefits for us and find funding for it. Don't tell our employers to do it when they can hardly afford to operate in the present system. Drug testing is a waste of our time and resources to combat

problems we don't have. It's bad business to have guides with drug and alcohol problems. So companies have always dealt with their problems in-house. They "nip" the problem "in the bud" before it costs the company money.

The industries we are being associated with operate vessels and machines which travel at speeds, or in planes, where neglect is very costly. Yet the people who operate those machines and vessels are never surrounded by their passengers; they seem to be disconnected and isolated from the people. So as passengers, how are they going to get the feeling of being comfortable knowing what their pilot or captain is capable of?

They can't spend time with them to decide if they are capable of doing their jobs on or off drugs and alcohol. And even if they could, can they have them stop so they can get on another plane, train or bus, because they don't feel safe? Not!

If we are considered to be in the transportation industry, why not treat us more like an industry before regulating us as one? Like maybe affordable health insurance and work benefits accessible for seasonal employees. The people who think drug testing is needed should focus their efforts on problems we have, not perceived problems.

So while in a raft on a river that flows at 10 mph or less with a guide who is paid to do a job of interpretation and navigation isn't it easy to make the decision? It's pretty obvious if a guide is unable to navigate a boat regardless of drugs or not. The direct communication passengers get from their guides will also dictate the capacity of the guide. Finally after making an educated decision, if clients don't feel comfortable riding in a boat with a questionable guide, they can ride on another boat for the duration of the trip. After the trip the clients feedback to the company is read and processed. This feedback is what keeps companies operating and doing an excellent job. Feedback is the employers gauge of what clients like or didn't like, and if the clients felt uncomfortable with a certain guide, the company knows, and in turn deals with the problem. If guides do an excellent job, clients refer friends to the company they went with. Referrals are a large and cheap way of advertising.

Isn't it amazing how the other transportation industries have had and are still having accidents, sometimes caused by drugs and alcohol? While in our little non-industry, we don't have and haven't had a problem to date?

Why does our system that works, need to be changed? I ask the people who are handing us the drug language to answer my problems?