



THE HARBOR

Jay: ‘I’m Just Not Done Yet’

An addiction to methamphetamine has contributed to the homeless life.

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Jay was in his late 20s, working a construction job, the first time someone introduced him to methamphetamines, known more commonly these days as “ice.” They had a job to finish by the morning, and the only way to get it done was to work straight through the night.

“I have something that can help,” his coworker said.

Sitting in his makeshift camp at the back of the Waianae Boat Harbor,



Jay loads up his keawe/mesquite fired stove.

Jay says he can't remember if it was before he tried ice or not long after, that a friend warned him that life flies by fast. Make something of yourself. Have a family, his friend said. You'll be 50 before you know it.

A few years ago, Jay was serving time for burglary, and his friend's warning came flooding back to him. He realized 50 was fast approaching. He thought about how quickly his life had passed by and about all the things he had never done. "I started to cry," he said.

Jay lives in a wilder section of the camp, where the paths are smaller and the grass grows tall. There are few families living back here. It's hot, and rough. Burglaries are frequent. In September, someone tried to set Jay's tent on fire.

His family in The Harbor is a well-cared-for golden-haired mutt, and a few stray cats who call Jay's blue tent home. He makes money by fishing and collecting opihi, a prized shellfish that clings to the rocky coastline.

Jay's pride and joy is his garden. He hauls several 5-gallon buckets of water along narrow dirt paths each day to water his little papaya trees, cactus plants, and fledgling pineapple bush.

Caring for his plants and watching them grow makes him feel good, Jay says, even on days when nothing seems to be going the way he wants it to.

Jay says his probation for a burglary committed more than a decade ago is over. He's turning 50 later this year. He says he's doing pretty good. Sometimes, he wishes no one in the camp used ice, he says. But he still measures his success these days in how often he gets to smoke it.

"I guess I'm just not done yet," he says.



Jay sits in his camp area complete with falling kiawe tree.

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