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Experimentation Turns Deadly for One Teenager

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SAN DIEGO -- Quiksilver was dead.

Word raced through the Internet chat room within hours after his mother found him in the bedroom where his clock radio played on, summoning him for the day he would never see.

Out in the Internet ether, Quiksilver was a guru, a master at mixing the drugs he bought online, a deft chronicler of his own trips.

At home in La Mesa, Calif., Ryan T. Haight had been a teenager smitten with Quiksilver sports clothes, baseball cards and downloading music. He was an honor student, a tennis player, a clerk at a discount store and just barely 18.

After Ryan died on Feb. 12, 2001, his parents found a bottle of the painkiller Vicodin in his room with a label from an out-of-state pharmacy. They called federal drug agents.

The agents resurrected Ryan's double life from the family computer: The teenager ordering addictive drugs online and paying with a debit card his parents gave him to buy baseball cards on eBay.

"Ryan ran and got the mail every day -- and I'm thinking he's all excited getting his baseball cards," said his mother, Francine Haight. "He was getting drugs mailed right to the house. It was so easy."

Without a physical exam or his parents' consent, Ryan had obtained controlled substances. Some came from overseas. Others arrived from an Internet site in Oklahoma. Ryan's slide into drugs took only a few months before it ended in an overdose on a cocktail of painkillers, including hydrocodone (generic Vicodin), an autopsy revealed. He had become a regular on bluelight.nu -- a foreign bulletin board where users share recipes for heady mixes of prescription drugs. Ryan's mother, a nurse, and his father, Bruce Haight, an eye surgeon, knew the dangers of prescription drugs. But "the idea you can buy these on an Internet site and that someone in the medical profession would send them to you without ever seeing you is beyond imagining, beyond horrible," his father said. "How could doctors sell out like that?"

Since Ryan's death, "I've gone on to some of these sites, and once you do that and they have your address, your [Internet] mailbox is full with offers," his mother said.

Ryan's parents thought they had taken precautions. They had insisted that the family

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computer stay in the den. They did not know Ryan was sneaking from his bed at 1 a.m., ordering drugs and getting high. The clink of ice falling into a glass from the refrigerator door sometimes woke his mother. She thought he simply shared her restlessness. When he slept until noon, "it was like any teenager," his father said. "We weren't lucky enough to get a warning sign, like a trip to the emergency room."

When his parents separated in late 2000, they shared weekends with him.

On the weekend he died, Ryan worked on a cold, rainy Sunday. His mother made him chicken soup in a crockpot. When she talked with him, around midnight, he was listening to music. He hugged her goodnight.

On Monday, the 12th, he slept in. It was not a school day. His mother went out to do errands.

When she returned home about 3 p.m., she saw Ryan's car in the driveway. She had a bad feeling. She went to his room, heard his radio, opened the door and found him. Her attempt at CPR was useless. He had been dead since 2 a.m.

His parents filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against the Oklahoma Web site Main Street Pharmacy. The site's owner, Clayton Fuchs, denies the family's claims, saying they "failed to exercise ordinary care."

Online, Ryan's death was met with disbelief. "I considered Ryan to be the most experienced and wise person I know when it came to drugs . . . I was so incredibly shocked," wrote ZeroHawk. And from beyond the grave came Ryan's own account of one of his last trips, sent in an e-mail started at 10:28 p.m. on Feb. 10, 2001. He had taken drugs he had received "in the mail that day," grabbed a Sprite and ice and wrote of "the little whirlpools of color moving all over. Not TOO much to handle. They were PERFECT."



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