Hollywood Exclusive - Jeff Conaway declares he's now cured and sober, Janine Turner applauded for defe

by Marilyn Beck & Stacy Jenel Smi

Jeff Conaway, most known from his roles on "Taxi" and "Grease," gained a new reputation in the last few years as an addict. The actor, who was seen hunched over and suffering from a severe back injury, appeared on VH1's "Celebrity Rehab with Dr. Drew," where fans were shocked by his declining health.

However, Conaway now declares to this column that he is finally sober.

"I had my fifth operation in November, and I'm standing up straight and walking normally. The doctors even called it a miracle. I'm really happy, pleased and clean," says the actor.

Conway's problems started with a broken back, and escalated as he became addicted not only to painkillers, but to cocaine and alcohol â€” which, he says, he used to try to deal with pain that his prescription meds weren't touching.

He's thrilled with his new lease on life and is already taking meetings about upcoming acting projects â€” but says he wishes Dr. Drew Pinsky had had more faith in his back recovery.

"Dr. Drew told me, 'You're not going to get better. This is as good as it's going to get. You've had four surgeries already. It didn't work. Nothing's going to work,'" he recalls. "I was shocked that a man in that position would deflate someone's 'go getting-ness.' Don't get me wrong, I love Dr. Drew," he adds. "I think he's a wonderful, dedicated, terrific man, but I got him on this one."

Asked if he'd consider returning to the VH1 show, Conaway tells us, "I'm not rushing to go back to that circus. I think I'm pretty done with that. The only reason I would go back would be to be an example of somebody who went through it and made it."

GETTING PERSONAL: Janine Turner, who took on venomous conservative pundit Ann Coulter on Bill O'Reilly's show last month in defense of single moms, has been getting thank-you notes from fellow solo parents. Also, "I've been asked by numerous other shows to do it again, but I'll have to see â€¦ At least I did the one," says the former "Northern Exposure" and "Strong Medicine" star, who is now being seen on NBC's "Friday Night Lights."

Turner wrote the book on admirable single moms, literally, with her 2008 "Holding Her Head High: Inspiration from 12 Single Mothers Who Championed Their Children and Changed History." "Look at what

these women did, what they accomplished, and what so many women all over America are doing today. I was glad to go out there and champion them. In a way, they championed me," says Turner.

With "Friday Night Lights" â€” on which she's playing the nouveau-riche mother of a promising high school football player â€” wrapped for the season, she has her agenda full of other activities. She and her dad serve as their own hands on the Texas ranch they share, she lets us know. "We muck out the stalls, take the trash a mile and a half to the corner â€¦ " But most important to Turner is focusing on her 11-year-old daughter, Juliette. "She is my gift. She is my blessing. What we're doing now is â€” she's been able to sit down at the piano and compose music since she was 3 or 4 years old, and I've been saying I have to do an album before I'm 50," says the actress, who still has nearly four years to go. "So she's doing the music, and I'm doing the lyrics, and we're going to cut this album."

MAKING THE MINUTES COUNT: Steve Martin tells us, "I'm working on another book," and he has another project "that's two years away." Plus, "I usually have time to practice the banjo when I'm working. On movie sets the days are long; it takes a long time to make a movie. It's great to have a hobby to do in your trailer while awaiting your calls." The multi-talent â€” whose co-presenter bit with Tina Fey at the Oscars was so appealing maybe they should think about partnering in something â€” is about to begin filming Nancy Meyers' yet-untitled romantic comedy with Meryl Streep and Alec Baldwin.

OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD: "Private Practice's" Paul Adelstein admits that there are times the drama and trauma depicted on the show gets so intense, "some things are hard to shake at the end of the day." For instance, last month's episode "involving the issue of vaccination where the kid dies â€” Jill Armenante, who played the mother, was so good, and the kid was so heart-wrenching. His makeup was so good he really looked sick," notes Adelstein, whose pediatrician character administered the questionable shot. "Doing the scene over and over again, well, I didn't realize the effect it was having on me until later. You can't let things like that consume you. Playing life and death scenes, scenes with sick people, tragedies â€” if you took in the tragedy of it all the time, you'd explode."

However, he adds, "Sometimes things stay with you at the end of the day in the very best way" â€” on the show in which the medicos tend to have very active sex lives. He attributes the instantaneous changes of mood on the show to the skills of creator Shonda Rhimes, "the strength of her writing. I love it because that's the way life works."

With reports by Emily Feimster.

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