

# Is The Social Pot Smoker Really In Peril?



Methamphetamine users, "speed freaks," use needles like this one kept as a souvenir by Ed Crowell, deputy chief probation officer of Santa Cruz County. Hepatitis from unsterile needles, paranoia and a predilection for violence characterize the user of speed.

(Second in a series)  
By Peter R. Walls  
Sentinel Staff Writer

That drug use among the young is rising sharply and steadily is today a truism.

One Santa Cruz High School student estimated that at least 60 per cent of the student body had turned on, and at least 25 per cent use marijuana regularly.

"Grass just sort of makes you stupid, you know. You're just there, man."

This is not the goal-oriented, hard-working, optimistic, Protestant Ethic-laden young American talking. But neither is he atypical. He speaks for a sizeable chunk of young people who are given to "now" over "later."

There may be, after all, no "later," a view that reflects the shape the entire world is in, not just the young.

"The elite student is among the first to realize that the values of the past may be totally inappropriate for the world in which he will be an adult. The student furthermore despairs of the future since he finds it unpredictable and feels powerless to direct it. Faced with a bewildering rate of social change he learns to be 'cool,' to avoid commitment, and live in the present," wrote Dr. Seymour Halleck, director of psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin.

The issue of marijuana's legalization, while interesting, is only partly relevant to the issue of pot smoking.

True, some smoke because it is forbidden by law, but for the vast majority of the young who smoke it, pot is a social thing, like drinking.

"Kids take pot for the same reason their parents drink—it's a thing to do with your

peer group," said one UCSC student.

"I have yet to meet a kid," says Ed Crowell, deputy chief probation officer, "who has gone behind the barn and done it by himself."

Rebellion, said Superior Court Judge Charles Franich, has much to do with pot use, although he discounted peer pressure as a prime reason. "Those who use it have a personality problem," said the judge. "They feel ten feet tall when high, and inadequate otherwise."

But feeling left out of the group if you don't go along with "the scene" appears to be an important factor, says Dr. Donald Seapy, a Scotts Valley physician, and chairman of the County medical society's Drug Abuse Committee.

The crux of the matter is the breakdown of the family unit.

"These kids seek love and acceptance, and if they don't get it in the home, then they seek it in their peer group," he said.

The young use pot, he continued, mainly because it is available to them, and because they have not been taught to cope with the pressures around them.

"When you can't channel or suppress," he said, "you escape."

This is not to say, of course, that everyone who smokes pot is in desperate straits. Most of them, says Police Sgt. Charles Derby, are simply curious.

"We get all kinds of kids on marijuana charges — sons and daughters of doctors, teachers, the works. We find that most of them drop it after the first time, and most can't admit they've done anything wrong."

Rebellion, acquiescence to peer pressure, and experimentation, all of them linked to some family turmoil, seem to be the main reasons for the use of pot initially, and contain the seeds of continued use.

"We don't have any evidence," said Dr. Seapy, "to show that if a person uses pot once a week he'll come to any harm." Pot is an escape hatch, he added. The young use it like alcohol.

"It is true," says Judge Franich, "that 95 per cent of hard narcotics users started on marijuana, but it is not true that 95 per cent of marijuana users go on to narcotics."

The progression of drug use from pot to LSD to "speed" to narcotics hardly is the rule, although it happens. Whether it happens depends upon the sta-

bility and maturity of the person using the drug. Alcohol use would be an analogy.

"Most of the kids are discriminating enough to know to lay off some of the drugs available," said Crowell.

Speed is easily obtained but not widely used—compared to marijuana—because of the danger in its use. Hepatitis and paronia are clear and present dangers to most kids, says Crowell.

The schools have drug education programs, but even the leaders of these programs admit their success in forestalling pot smoking has been modest.

"You can no longer wag your finger at a kid and say 'No' because they know," says Robert Soderholm, city school official and head of the drug education program.

And Crowell suggests that the young grape vine and personal experience concerning the dangers of certain drugs is the most effective way of curbing their use. LSD use has dropped sharply in the past year, and methamphetamine "shooting" has continued only among those who are emotionally unstable.

In other words, the social pot smoker and the social drinker have much in common. Both get their highs, and both stand in some danger of over-use.

But neither stand on the slippery slope. Somewhere between ecstasy and degradation lies the truth of drug use.

## One Man's Opinion

BY ELDEN HOLMES

### HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Did you know that if it weren't for the English and their revision of the calendar two centuries ago, we might all be saying "Happy New Year" today,

March 25th, and not two months ago?

It seems that in 1732 — 150 years after Pope Gregory had corrected the old Roman "Julian" Calendar to what we know as the Gregorian Calendar — Great Britain decided to bring their calendar up to date and it was adopted by the American Colonies.

In the British revision, 11 days were dropped from the month of September and thus

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