

Pot and Frogs' Legs

As a 17 year old nerd-boy in the late 1970s, I viewed pot smokers in my school as “derelicts,” with little commonsense and no direction. But secretly, I envied their impudence and free-spirit. I was a scrawny, zit-faced, and under the tight control of a loving but overprotective single mother. Opportunities to sample weed, or any other carnal indulgence were non-existent.

But courtesy of a French Club bus trip to New York City, the chance to try several forbidden fruits manifested. First, a classmate passed around menthol Newports at the back of the bus. I don't know why the teacher chaperones allowed this to happen. But they were in front and probably didn't care as long as they heard a few French phrases. They also may have been indulging in their own bacchanalia.

I had never smoked, but I did not think it unusual that I choked through two cigarettes in 20 minutes – my father was a two-pack-a-day smoker, and he consumed them like tic-tacs. Of course, it was the cigarettes that killed him.

Having proven myself capable of inhaling menthol smoke, I was emboldened when another student offered a lit joint. Entranced by the effects of the menthol, I eagerly accepted and took a hit. Then a few more – it took a while to figure out how to extract the fruity smoke and hold it in correctly. After a few more, I began to experience a strange euphoria.

We arrived at the French restaurant, where, as the drinking age was just 18, we were all encouraged to order wine (that I was still 17 seemed unimportant). I had drunk wine at home, but not as much as I was about to. I must have had a least 5 glasses – I felt quite continental trying different varieties. I also had never eaten vichyssoise, frogs' legs, snails, bouillabaisse – but I devoured these. There was some exotic desserts to share too, and I sampled all of them.

The bus ride home featured more pot and menthol cigarettes and some adolescent petting. The only denied indulgence was at my clumsy attempt to kiss Micheline, but she brushed me off humanely with a giggle.

When I arrived home, I was wasted and staggering. I was also quite sick to my stomach. It was 12 PM. My mother greeted me anxiously at the door “Are you ok?” I opened my mouth to reply, then vomited at her feet. Then I wiped my chin and said “Mom, I’m sick, it must have been the frogs’ legs.”