

# POT ON THE CAMPUS

By Larry Chilnick

*Where there's smoke, there will be fire*

*Photographs by Robert M. Howard*

The use of marijuana and synthetic drugs has become almost commonplace among college students. This and the startlingly casual attitude many students have about using marijuana and drugs that could send them to prison for a decade or longer are the most overwhelming conclusions to be drawn from a look at campus customs today.

Pot smokers are not notoriously talkative about their habits. Recently, however, on the University of Oklahoma campus, six students, representing several aspects of student life, met secretly to discuss their drug use and the effects it has had on their lives. One student, Bob, comes from a middle-sized Oklahoma community and is a member of one of the largest fraternities. He says he smokes marijuana "not very often." Dan is a junior-college transfer from Chicago and uses pot "whenever I can get it, which is not too often." Kathy is also from a medium-sized Oklahoma town. She is a member of a large, prestigious sorority and says, "I smoke sometimes two or three times a week, and then other weeks none at all." Richard is a journalism student from Houston and is interested in music; he smokes "regularly." Randy is a history major from New York, and he uses marijuana "about three times a week." Jim is also from New York, wears his hair shoulder length, and has a handlebar mustache. He uses pot "sometimes seven or eight months at a time; sometimes I lay off for a couple of months."

The session began with speculation as to the number of people who smoke marijuana on the Norman campus. Randy said at least three out of every ten students use it. Richard said that

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*Larry Chilnick, a senior in arts and sciences, was editor of the Oklahoma Daily during the fall semester (SM, Jan.). This article originally appeared in the Oklahoma Courier and is reprinted with permission.*

was "a conservative estimate." He added: "When you've been around people who have handled and are actively peddling dope [a slang term for marijuana], you realize that the figure is much more astounding than you thought. I've been at some guy's house when he says, 'This key [kilogram of marijuana] goes to this fraternity and this key goes to this house,' parceling out huge quantities."

"I was really surprised to find that so many guys in the fraternity houses were smoking," Randy said. "Also, I have five courses this semester, and I found from talking with my teachers that three of *them* smoked."

Kathy chimed in: "There's a lot of grass in sororities, too." Dan agreed: "In the Greek houses the percentage of those who smoke is higher than 30 percent." Randy said, "Well, there are certain houses that would really surprise you. I think one of them turns on like twice a week, the whole house."

If there is so much marijuana on the OU campus, where does it come from? Many students say Mexico is a major source, despite strong controls on the border. Students who visit Mexico often are searched when they return to the United States, but sometimes the control breaks down. "I don't understand," said Randy. "If the border is so tight, why is there never a shortage of stuff right here in Norman? There are always five or six numbers you can call."

"I don't know," said Jim, "but New York doesn't have anything to compare with Norman's quality. Some of the best pot I've smoked, I got here."

"I think most of it is coming up from Texas," said Robert. "I've heard everything coagulates in Austin."

Students claim that pot is the alcohol of the sixties. Randy summed up a common feeling: "I think the

really important thing is that getting high on grass is a lot better than alcohol."

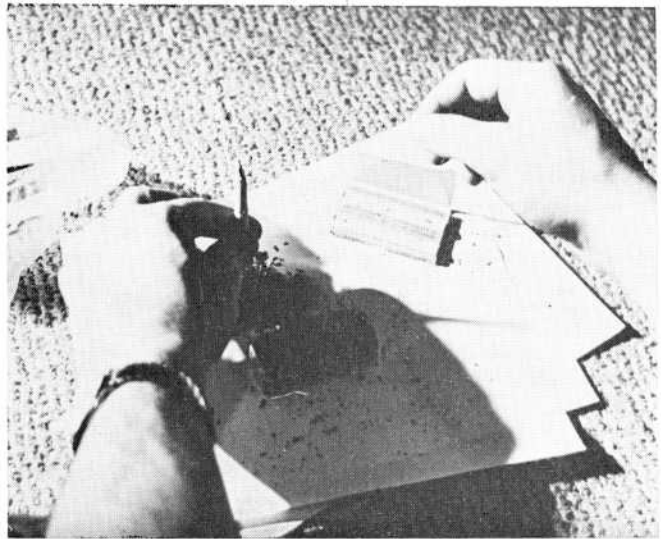
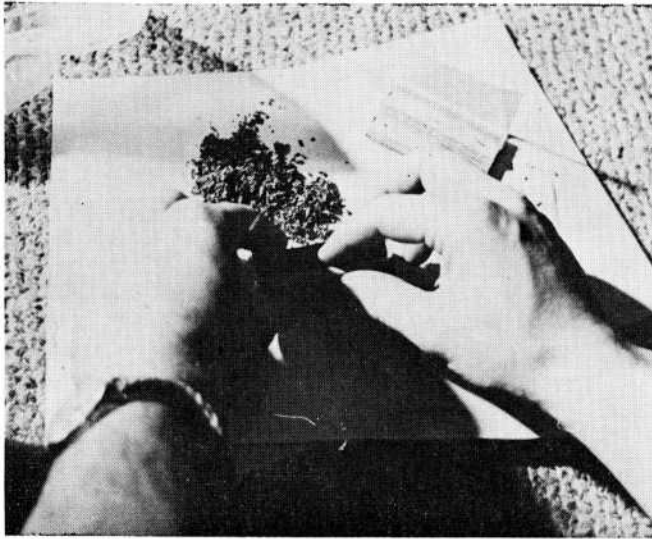
This comment stimulated a lively discussion. "Heads" [pot-smokers and drug-users] sometimes compare experiences with marijuana. Most agree that smoking a cigarette made with "good stuff" results in the onset of symptoms within five or ten minutes. The most common reactions, the students agree, are a generalized physical relaxation, some euphoria, and a sense of time disorientation that is pleasant.

Observers have said that some smokers see everything as funny and tend to laugh or giggle at the slightest provocation. Those in the rap session agreed that the "high" from marijuana is not comparable with the "buzz" from alcohol. The smoker can still think rationally, although he prefers to free associate or drift; only one user in the session said he felt any impulse to move about or be physically active.

The effects of a single "joint" [cigarette] may last as long as four hours. There is, users agreed, no hangover. There was general agreement that marijuana has become a tension reliever for many. And a social custom: "If you came down here in 1957," Bob said, "the social thing was drinking beer. Now it's grass."

The federal Marijuana Tax Stamp Act provides a maximum sentence of thirty years for selling and up to life imprisonment for selling to a minor. The Oklahoma law provides for a sentence of up to seven years for possession of marijuana. Are these stiff laws deterrents to marijuana users? Do they think about them a lot? "Of course you think about them," Richard said. "I've spent plenty of uptight nights because of them," admitted Jim.

"I don't think they're a deterrent," said Randy. "They're just something that gets you uptight. They take



A student rolls his own reefer

What is marijuana? The reefer, the joint, or the stick, whichever term you prefer for a marijuana cigarette, comes from a tall, weedy hemp plant that is a first cousin to the fig and known scientifically as *cannabis sativa*. The flat, olive leaves, usually three times longer than wide, are found on a stalk that sometimes grows to six feet or more. When dried and pressed, the leaves, stems, and seeds are ground, sifted, and cut [diluted] for smoking. The most powerful ingredient in the plant is a resin taken from the flower of the female plant and known as hashish, the strongest and most valuable form of marijuana. One "toke" or puff of hashish is equal to one joint, if not more, of marijuana.

The marijuana plant probably first appeared in central Asia or China and was noted in a Chinese book of pharmacy written nearly 3,000 BC by one Shen Nung and called "the liberator of sin." If an Oklahoman were to seek marijuana, he wouldn't have to look too far, for the state's climate is nearly ideal for growing the plant, which thrives in a light, soft, marshy soil both warm and damp. It also requires a hot sun. The best climates for growing can be found in Asian countries such as India, Burma, and Vietnam. Dr. William McGlothlin, a Harvard psychologist, says the marijuana available in the United States is estimated to be one-eighth to one-fifth as potent as that grown in India.

Most marijuana in Oklahoma is smuggled from Mexico. Most users don't buy their grass from pushers in a dim-lighted alley as some popular misconceptions may lead us to believe. Most is

circulated among friends and very rarely paid for. In Norman, an ounce, good for many cigarettes, costs \$15. Says one user, "Most people are so uptight about narcs they only get their grass from someone they know and trust." The smoker takes his pot in several forms. The most common is the cigarette. Cigarettes are rolled with paper either by hand or in a small rolling machine and are pinched at both ends to preserve the pot and speed smoking. When a small quantity is available, a regular tobacco pipe can be used with a shallow bowl fashioned from tin foil. The hookah or water pipe is another common device.

When the smoker inhales, he doesn't immediately exhale but holds the smoke inside his lungs. After one to three joints, the smoker usually senses heightened effects. Colors, smells, and tastes usually become extremely vivid. The feeling, with some loss of depth perception, can last from two to four hours with a residual high lingering longer sometimes. The effects are rarely the same for any two people. Most smokers tend to become passive. Many giggle easily. In addition to heightened sensory perception, the time sense becomes disoriented in ways that smokers generally find pleasant. There is a general physical relaxation. Some smokers have—or think they have—an ability to reach insights about human behavior under the influence of marijuana. A marijuana party differs distinctly from an affair where alcohol is consumed. The smokers are generally much quieter, more subdued, and more reflective than the alcohol group. There is also an absence of debate and conflict that one often discovers with the alcohol set.

something away from smoking, but they don't stop you."

What if marijuana were legal? Jim: "I would smoke every day." Bob: "I don't think I'd smoke any more or any less." Randy: "I think it might be a bad idea to legalize marijuana, but there wouldn't be any more wars." Richard: "This society is built on alcohol. There are a lot of alcoholics; alcohol is their 'speed.' Pot has an entirely different effect on you, and if it were legalized, society would change."

A university, a leading arbiter of social change, is also a place where marijuana is widely used. Recently President J. Herbert Hollomon intensified the University of Oklahoma's campaign against drug pushers, sending an interdepartmental com-

munication to William Jones, head of the campus security office. The memo noted that drug use (marijuana) was increasing and that he was particularly interested in drying up the sources on the campus. Jones concurs with Hollomon on the need to arrest the pushers. "I don't know how much drug use there is on the campus, but we are continually interested in trafficking and we are directing our efforts toward the sources," he says. "Ending the sources would, of course, create a prohibition on the campus."

Jones, who joined the OU staff in September, has a great deal of experience in narcotics detection and has been what the drug user refers to as a "narc." He has been trained at the federal narcotics bureau and headed the vice squad in Portland, Oregon.

The department in Portland used police agents and informers, techniques which, he says, were quite effective. Since September the campus police department has made one arrest for narcotics violations. However, the new head of the campus law enforcement office is not a fanatic engaged in a vendetta against "long-hairs" and hippie types, usually thought of as the targets for police and a prime source of drugs. "We probably do not have as much pot at OU as at other large campuses, because we aren't near the basic sources of drug usage," he says. "In New York and in Los Angeles, it's somewhat like an epidemic."

And in a university environment?

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obviously yes. George Wallace proposed to turn Washington, D.C. into a model city. He would effect this by stationing a trooper with a fixed bayonet every three feet throughout the city. There can be little doubt that Mr. Wallace would have law and order, but would he have a model *American* city? Most assuredly not. His model is fashioned along the lines of a totalitarian state, not that of the United States.

Law and order exists in the absence of social justice

## Pot on Campus

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"I think in an academic atmosphere there are strong inclinations toward challenging authority and toward experimentation which can lead into drug usage. These are, perhaps, reasons why drugs have become prevalent on the campus." Jones heeds the hard to moderate line. "I feel marijuana is as dangerous as alcohol, but even more dangerous in its stepping-stone effect leading to heroin," he says. "It's as serious as someone over-indulging in alcohol, though there are no stiff penalties for drinking. Possession of alcohol isn't a felony. I believe drug usage needs to be studied as an illness. Putting someone in jail doesn't cure an illness."

Jones says he is against legalizing marijuana. "It has nothing but damaging effects on the younger generation and is an open invitation to defy authority," he says.

President Hollomon has said that the University's attitude must be that "we cannot tolerate the breaking of laws. The question of illegal drug use is subject to the rules in the Student Guide."

The guide's provisions against the use of drugs are specific, listing the use of narcotics, marijuana, and hallucinogenic drugs under regulations for which students may be disciplined.

Says President Hollomon: "The use of drugs here is not nearly as large a problem as on the East and West coasts; this is most likely due to the nature of the clientele. I think it's because the people here are some distance from a large city and because parental attitudes and the general environment have curbed drug use."

The fact that young Americans are using drugs is no longer a shocking revelation. Most psychologists, university administrators, and law en-

forcement agents readily admit that the use of marijuana and amphetamines is prevalent, and their investigations have turned toward the "why?" and "what?" of drugs rather than the "how much?" Recently three Boston University scientists released another finding to be piled upon the growing mass of literature now available on drug problems. The study concludes that "marijuana is a relatively mild intoxicant." In effect, it said, "Marijuana isn't as bad as the older generation thinks, and it isn't as innocent as the younger generation claims."

The debates about whether marijuana is harmful or not goes on. The President's Commission report addressed itself to the disagreement when it stated: "Differences of opinion are absolute and the claims beyond reconciliation. While one group points to one set of statistics, the other points to a lack of statistics." And recognizing the discrepancies among laws, the nature of the crime, and the divided opinion among the population, the commission set forth recommendations to close "existing knowledge gaps." Among the major ones was that the National Institute of Mental Health should devise and execute a plan of research to be conducted on both an intramural and extramural basis, covering all aspects of marijuana use. What the commission was implying is what most people agree on, no matter what their position: "Our knowledge is limited and there needs to be a study to end all studies." The commission recommended that the pharmacology, the relation to addictiveness, crime, and other drugs must be a major part of the investigation.

A way to determine the incidence of marijuana use on campus (a poll

only through the use of repressive means. Put simply and succinctly, such repression is unAmerican. It flies in the face of all that for which our nation stands. Thus, in the United States law and order can be maintained without social justice, but at a frightful cost. The price paid would be the very moral fiber and heritage of America.

The description of the New York riot is drawn from *The Second Rebellion: The Story of the New York Draft Riots of 1863* (New York, 1968) by James McCague.

maybe?) is not feasible, and all estimates are subject to error. The common image of the typical pot smoker is the perennial scapegoat, the long-haired nonconformist, and it is possible that the rate of use among such a group of students is relatively high. Much of the smoking is done, however, by conventional appearing students—straights—and even the epitomes of middle-class aspiration, Greeks.

To try to arrive at a percentage of use among students is pure folly. Qualifications would be necessary as to frequency in order to get an accurate picture: How many have tried pot only once or twice and now do not smoke? How many smoke regularly? How regularly? How many smoke only rarely?

There are several reasons why students persist in using a drug whose penalties for possession and sale are as severe as manslaughter and even murder. One is that it is a symbol of a generation's rebelliousness and independence. Another is that the students don't believe it is as dangerous as the adults have told them; many believe it is not harmful at all. This is because there have been many exaggerations and distortions about the drug and little evidence with which opponents can substantiate their claims of danger. "Just because you have been lied to about the dangers of marijuana doesn't mean it isn't dangerous," says Dr. Louis J. West, head of OU Medical School's department of psychiatry and a man who has conducted research with mind-altering drugs.

The students' disbelief is further compounded by the hypocrisies of laws concerning other drugs. Tobacco has been shown to be deadly in a number of ways, yet the government subsidizes the tobacco industry at the same time it investigates the danger of its product. Alcohol is

known to be potentially harmful physically as well as a trigger of accidents and crime, yet it is widely used and legal.

Others resent the harshness of the laws and the way that they have been used in some cases to imprison young people whose political views have been unpopular and contrary to government policy. These students see the older generation using the marijuana laws as means to silence political rebels and the unconventional young.

Students can also read critical articles by physicians, scientists, and social scientists criticizing what they

call the unreasonableness of the drug laws and the lack of evidence of the potential harm of some drugs; this reinforces their belief that society's stance on pot is wrong and theirs is correct.

Finally, not to be discounted is the pressure to conform to the practices of one's peer group. The wish to be one of the gang has contributed to experimentation with marijuana just as it does with alcohol and tobacco.

Unfortunately, the lack of information about marijuana, the harsh laws controlling its use, the hypocrisies of attitudes by society toward other harmful though legal drugs, the belief

of users that marijuana is not really harmful, the rebellious tenor of the times, the emotional backlash of a growing number of adults who wish to suppress the young, and the myths and legends which have grown up about marijuana make a rational approach difficult, if not nearly impossible at this painful point in our history.

The use of marijuana by college and university students is an inescapable fact, one that must be faced calmly and intelligently. President Hollomon says ignoring the subject won't solve anything; it must be dealt with. □

## Campus Notes

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The seven departments in the office building are political science, history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, and geography. On the top floor is a spacious faculty lounge overlooking the city and the campus.

### A New Service

Students and other members of the campus community can now call 325-2221 and receive free emergency assistance from two new 1969 Chevrolet station wagons, painted brightly and appropriately red and white, which patrol all University property and housing areas as well as the Greek housing areas twenty-four hours a day. The OU Police Department added the cars in February. They are equipped to provide first aid and to serve as ambulances; they also contain equipment to control minor fires. Drivers who run out of gas may call upon the cars for enough gas to get them to a service station, and those with dead batteries can borrow a start from the cars' jumper cables. This last service has already prompted one grateful letter-to-the-editor in the Oklahoma Daily from a student.

### The Consti-choo-tion?

Most students don't give an old textbook about student government, just as most of their elders are apathetic about their government. Voting turnouts certainly lead one to this conclusion. Rarely have more than 20 percent of the eligible voters gone to the polls at OU to vote on issues and representatives; usually the percentage is a good deal lower. The supreme non-interest that most students display is not only normal apathy which will mark most of their adult lives but an understandable desire not to be bothered with inconsequentials.

Most student governments are irrelevant at best. At OU the "governing" body was, until this year when it was dissolved (and

nobody noticed), the Student Senate, which was largely a superfluous entity, a playpen for would-be politicians and activity point-accumulating fraternity boys and sorority girls who seemed to gain immense satisfaction from Robert's Rules of Order and the meaningless intrigues which characterized the internal workings of the body. Students appreciated the occasional requests for holidays which the senate would forward to the administration (and sometimes receive), but some others were never aware that such a body existed, and many couldn't have cared less.

The senate had 40 members proportioned among the colleges, the Panhellenic Council, the Interfraternity Council, and the Independent Students Association (which folded in 1967 when its president pledged a fraternity). The senate was dominated by Greeks, who love to participate in this sort of thing (it looks grand on the record) and who are the largest and best organized minority special interest group on campus. There were some independents in the senate, but most of them were indistinguishable from the Greeks; their emulation was touching.

Last spring in a rare and commendable spell of perception, the senate decided it would be a good idea if everybody went back to the student government drawing board in an effort to build a structure that would have more meaning for the students. A referendum was called which proposed the abolition of the Student Senate and the establishment of a constitutional convention. Students responded in trickles, as usual, and 928 voted yes. That was more than enough.

President Cross then appointed a steering committee to draw guidelines for the convention, the most crucial decision being on what basis to select the delegates. The machinery was not assembled until the fall semester. Delegates would be selected on basis of housing, it was decided, and there

would be 54 of them, seven of whom would be from Greek houses. (There are also numerous Greeks in University housing, mostly freshman pledges.) On Oct. 8-9 the election of delegates was held. Platforms of the candidates were printed earlier in the Oklahoma Daily, though a substantial number (twenty some-odd) failed to present any. This left the student voter in many instances with the game of picking the name he liked best. There was little time between the filing date and the election, and few candidates tried to sample the views from their constituents. About 20 percent, a strong showing, turned out to vote, and though this marked a 200 percent increase from the last senate election, it was rather dismal for those who expected a new surge of interest.

Sessions of the convention were held Nov. 7-10 at the Oklahoma Center for Continuing Education. At the first session delegates were seated, and standing rules were adopted with little debate. Six committees were formed (executive, legislative, judicial, student services, academic, and human rights), and Bob White was named chairman of the convention.

On Saturday the 9th and Sunday the 10th the sessions were disturbed by protests. On Saturday the convention's two black delegates walked out, criticizing the convention for failure to produce a worthy statement on minority rights. Sunday about one hundred dissenting students appeared at the meeting, occupying the public gallery and twenty-three vacant delegate seats. A large number of the dissenters were black students seeking a stronger stand on minority rights. White accepted a motion to adjourn the session for thirty minutes to try to get the dissenters out of the seats of the absent delegates. The students refused to move, so White decided to move the session to another building at OCCE. A group of young men materialized, whom White later identified as his fraternity brothers, and by blocking the doors of the new meeting place, prevented the dissenters from entering. They also prevented some delegates from entering. There was some scuffling, and finally the meeting adjourned before it began. The dissenting students held their own "convention," electing