

CELEBRATING POSITIVE CHOICES

# Listen

■ THAT BIG  
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MATTER, P. 13

## BRYAN WHITE

RISEING STAR ON COUNTRY'S HORIZON





# YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND

BY TANYA F. MAIER

Feeling a little down or gloomy this time of year, or just lonely and in need of some company? You don't have to look too far. Here are eight and a half rules to follow if you want to learn how to be a friend to yourself!

❑ 1. Learn that you first have to be a friend to yourself before you can be someone else's. Be kind, gentle, friendly, cheerful, understanding, caring, and most important, loving to those you meet. Take a close look in the



mirror and see who you are. Do you like that person? Would you want to be friends with that person? If not, then why would anyone else? If you can't love yourself, it will be difficult for others to love you. So tell yourself regularly, *I love you*, and then share those same three words more often with your parents, your friends, your boyfriend or girlfriend, and anyone else who is close to you.

❑ **2. Make a list of all your good qualities—as many as you can think of.** Brainstorm. There is no limit, and you do not need to share your list with anyone. Also jot down some of your less mentionable qualities, like eavesdropping, ignoring your little brother or sister, or cheating on an exam—and then write down what *you think you can do to try to change*. The first step is acknowledging those faults. The next step is committing yourself to change for the better. And while you're at it, try to overcome some of your fears. Scared of talking in front of the class? Try practicing a short speech in front of your best friend or a group of friends. Don't be afraid of change. Instead, welcome it and grow from there.

❑ **3. Pat yourself on the back once in a while.** Got a B+ on that English term paper, the one you spent hours researching at the library—three weekends in a row? Or maybe you finally figured out your algebra when you could have watched a movie with your friends instead. Or perhaps you were chosen from 40 others for your school cheerleading squad. Congratulations! You worked hard and deserve it. Keep a logbook of all your other accomplishments, including all the major ones and even some minor ones. When you get down or depressed, get out that book and glance at all of what you have achieved. There is nothing wrong with compliment-

ing yourself on a job well done.

❑ **4. Spoil yourself sometimes.** Now, I don't mean going out on a shopping spree with money you don't have or charging it to your parents' MasterCard. However, do something kind and considerate once in a while—for yourself. Go out and buy that new book you've been wanting, or a new CD, or a new outfit (even better if it's on sale!). It's completely up to you. Or maybe you just want to take a long, hot bath and unplug the phone for an evening. The idea here is to treat someone special—you!—with a gift or little token.

❑ **5. Learn to express and deal with your emotions, good and bad.** There is absolutely nothing wrong with crying once in a while. Release it. You'll feel a lot better afterward. Letting emotions such as fear, anger, jealousy, or hatred build up inside can only hurt you in the long run. Deal with what you are feeling *now*—not tomorrow, or next week, or next month. Look inside and ask yourself, *Why am I feeling like this?* Let go of the past and move on. Decide what is wrong and then follow through with positive action!

❑ **6. Yes, spend time with your friends and/or your girlfriend or boyfriend, but remember, it is equally important to spend time alone.** I repeat, *alone*. Although some of you might not realize it, all of us need our own space. Of course, too much time alone is not good either. Going into hiding and missing out on social events, such as school socials, is not advisable. However, spending a few hours with yourself gathering your thoughts, ideas, or feelings is part of growing up. Realize that you have your own unique identity apart from your friends or girlfriend or boyfriend. There needs to be a good balance of your time alone, time with one other person, and time spent with a group of people.

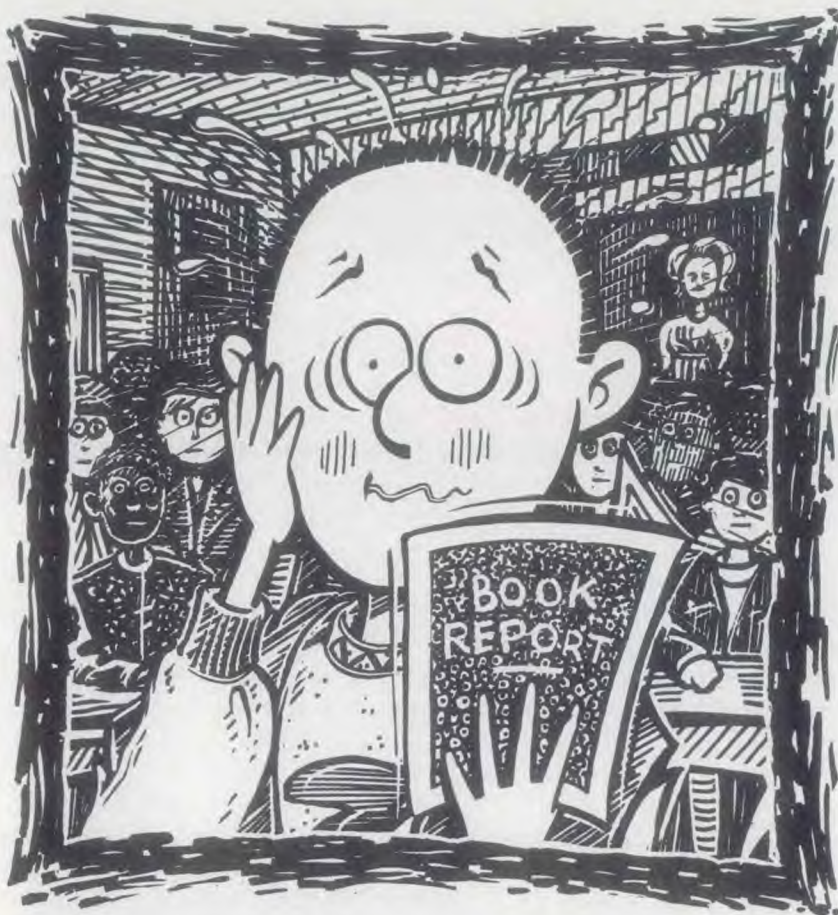
❑ **7. Learn to take care of yourself.** Be brave and say no to things that are bad or harmful for you. Don't let peer pressure push you into messing with smoking, alcohol, and other drugs.

Remember to eat properly, and keep in mind your four basic food groups. And I'm not referring to chips and popcorn, pizza and hot dogs, soda pop and ice cream, and candy and chocolate as the basic four food groups! Your body can't live solely on junk food. In addition, stay in shape by exercising. And get outdoors. I don't consider running after the bus in the morning your exercise for the day! Get involved. Instead of only *thinking* of going for that bike ride or rollerblading in the park, go out and actually do it!

❑ **8. Maintain a positive attitude in all that you do in life.** Replace those negative sayings with positive ones—responses such as “I can,” “I will,” “I'll do my best,” or “One more time.” And never give up. Also, try laughing at your mistakes. Sure, learning from them is equally important, but having a sense of humor when things are going badly can give you a whole new perspective on life. After all, life is a learning experience, and you still have lots to learn. So don't be so hard on yourself, and always keep that positive outlook.

❑ **8.5** Finally, half a rule for those of you who might be tempted to try to act older, or be “cool” by drinking or smoking just to impress someone you like. Don't pretend to be someone you're not. Just be yourself. I repeat, *just be yourself*. Be honest with others, but most important, *be honest with yourself*. Chin up, smile, and look straight ahead. Remember, you first have to be a best friend to yourself before you can be someone else's. It all starts with you. ▀





# NERVOUS IS NORMAL

**WET PALMS,  
TIGHT CHEST,  
PANIC ATTACK!**

Jason sits in English class waiting to give an oral book report. His hands are shaky. His

mouth feels as dry as the 3 x 5 cards his notes are written on. And although five students have given their reports before him, Jason hasn't heard a word they've said.

Rachael watches from backstage as she prepares to make her entrance in a community play. Her heart is pounding. She is terrified she will forget her lines and have to leave the stage, humiliated in front of family and friends.

Kevin listens to his girlfriend play a solo on her flute during her spring recital. Although Kevin plays the saxophone very well in private, he refuses to perform in public for fear he might miss a note and embarrass himself.

Jason, Rachael, and Kevin have stage fright. Stage fright is a normal feeling of nervousness or dread prior to performing in front of an

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audience. Many people are immobilized by stage fright. But actors and successful public performers know that you can control stage fright and even make it work for you to improve your performance. You just need to look at stage fright in a different way and follow a few basic suggestions.

"I'm the only one who's scared." Wrong! At least 90 percent of all performers say they feel stage fright. You'd be more unusual if you didn't feel scared.

"The audience knows I'm ready to panic." Wrong! Studies show that audiences don't notice nervousness nearly as much as performers think. If you pretend you're not a wreck, they'll believe you.

"The audience wants me to make a mistake so they can boo me off the stage." Wrong! Whether you sing, act, dance, or play an instrument, audiences admire performers. To them you're a star. They probably envy your talent, and they definitely want you to succeed.

"If I mess up my part, I'll die." Wrong! Millions of people have made mistakes onstage and lived to tell about it. Ask yourself what's the worst that could happen if you flub. Will the stage open up and swallow you? Get real. Will the audience walk out on you if you forget a line during a play? No way. Look at it this way: the audience doesn't know your line. How do they know you goofed?

"If I'm nervous, I'm sure to flop." Wrong! People who aren't keyed up for a performance often have a bored, "who cares" attitude they convey to the audience. In addition the anxiety you're feeling can actually help you. The fear of messing up will motivate you to work on and practice your performance until it becomes second nature and almost effortless.

Here are some tips to get you "onstage" without a major panic attack:

Practice. Practice. Practice. And

when you're tired of practicing, practice again. The single best way to control stage fright is to gain confidence. You accomplish that by knowing your lines, your speech, your steps, your music, etc. Start working well before the performance date—weeks before, if necessary.

Talk to yourself. Instead of thinking *I'm going to bomb*, think *I'm going to be sensational. People are going to love me. I can't wait to show them what I can do.* Use this positive self-talk often and everywhere,

Yawn. That's right, yawn. Your body needs oxygen to keep muscles relaxed, and if you're tense your breathing may become too shallow. Yawning gets the oxygen to your muscles quickly. If you don't want to yawn, take a few slow, deep breaths.

Stretch. Stretching helps tight muscles to relax. Additionally, if your hands are shaky, make clenched fists, hold them for a few seconds, and then relax. The shaky feeling should ease. The same trick of tightening muscles and relaxing

## GET REAL... MILLIONS OF PEOPLE HAVE MADE MISTAKES ONSTAGE AND LIVED TO TELL ABOUT IT.

during lunch, in class, before falling asleep. The instant a negative thought such as *I can't* creeps in, replace it with *I can and I will.*

Use your imagination. Instead of picturing yourself forgetting your part, in your mind's eye see yourself giving a flawless performance. Watch the audience smile, nod in approval, and applaud. Listen to the fantastic compliments. If you've worked hard, you'll soon watch this take place in reality.

Play to a small crowd, yourself at first. Rehearse in front of a mirror. If you're giving a speech, you need to hear yourself saying the words. Later ask your family and friends to watch you perform.

You've improved your attitude and you know your part. Now it's minutes before the curtains open. Do you have butterflies in your stomach? Vultures, you say. Good! You're normal. Here are a few suggestions to use just before the spotlight hits you.

them works for wobbly legs.

Concentrate on your first one or two lines. An amazing thing happens a minute after actors walk onstage. Regardless of how terrified they were waiting in the wings, once they say their first lines, their anxiety immediately disappears. Suddenly they can think again. If they've worked hard at rehearsal, their performance becomes almost automatic.

Keep talking to yourself, even onstage. "I'm doing great. I missed a note, but nobody noticed. I feel wonderful."

Play it again. A foolproof, can't-miss method for overcoming stage fright is to perform as often as possible.

Hopefully by now you understand that stage fright is absolutely normal, can't possibly hurt you, and can even be turned into a benefit.

Finally, the last suggestion: During the standing ovation, bow slowly, and remain humble. ■



MICHAEL  
WARREN

# AND SO FORTH

## FLORIDA IS GOING BATTY

Many people in Florida are inviting bats to live in their backyards. They are setting up bat pads about the size of birdhouses to give the flying mammals a place to call

home. Why are people so excited about bats? Because bats love mosquitoes. They can eat about 600 of them an hour, making them an ideal alternative to chemical pesticides.

## CRIME DOESN'T PAY

... especially when you're as bad at it as these people:

- ❑ A pawnshop owner in Missouri called the police after a man brought some suspicious jewelry into the shop. It belonged to the shop owner's wife!
- ❑ A mugger in West Virginia accepted a \$300 check from his victim. He was arrested when he tried to cash the check the next day.
- ❑ A burglar in Tennessee left his Nikes at a home he had just robbed. So he returned and asked the woman who lived there if she had seen his shoes.

## SUPERMARKET SECRETS

Today's supermarkets know a lot about their customers. Maybe more than they'd like! The average customer is female and visits the store 2.2 times a week. An average visit takes 35 to 40 minutes. Every additional minute means the customer will spend an extra \$2. And get this: when a supermarket wants to push a product, they know that the best sales location in an aisle is between 51 and 53 inches off the floor!

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

- ❑ You may think the town of Boring, Maryland, got its name because there wasn't much excitement around. But most likely it was named after the town's first postmaster, David J. Boring.
- ❑ When prospector Ed Schieffelin planned to go west to seek his fortune in Apache country, his friends told him the only thing he would find would be his own tombstone. But in 1877 he found silver in Arizona. He remembered his friends' warning and named the town Tombstone.
- ❑ When a newly formed town in Tennessee wanted to register its name with Washington, the clerk couldn't read the writing. He sent the request back and wrote "This is difficult" across the top. The townsfolk thought it was an order, so the town became Difficult, Tennessee.

## FREE HARRIER JET?

In a tongue-in-cheek television ad last year, Pepsi said it would give away a Harrier fighter jet to anyone who collected 7 million "Pepsi Stuff points." Most people thought the ad was a joke. But one college student and his friends raised \$700,000 to buy enough points to get the airplane, which is worth about \$24 million. Pepsi wouldn't give him the plane—they said the ad wasn't meant to be taken seriously. Here's the punch line: He's got an attorney, and he's suing Pepsi to get his airplane.



ILLUSTRATION: RICK THOMSON, MIKE CRESSY (RIGHT)







# WORRIED ABOUT THAT INTERVIEW?

# HELP WANTED

BY KAY D. RIZZO

**H**elp Wanted! Insect exterminator. Wow! Just what you've always wanted to do. Your heart skips a beat. You know you're perfect for the job. You hate those little creepy crawlies! And in your mind you've already spent the first paycheck.

Sounds good, but do you know how to ace an interview? It takes know-how, planning, and skill to land a job. Answer the following questions to see if you have job-market savvy.

## 1. Step 1 is:

- ☐ a. Enter the office with confidence.
- b. Do your research.

c. Be on time.

## 2. Information that will impress the interviewer will be:

- a. Your IQ.
- b. Your GPA.
- c. Your knowledge about the company for which you are interviewing.

## 3. Before you go for the interview, you will want to:

- a. Write a résumé.
- b. List your strengths and weaknesses.
- c. Have your hair styled.

## 4. When you dress for an interview, you will want to:

- a. Wear the best that money can buy.

b. Go with grungy.

c. Dress one step up from the clothes you'd wear on the job.

## 5. When the interview is scheduled for 4:00 p.m.:

- a. You get there somewhere around 4:00. After all, these people are never on time, right?
- b. You arrive at 3:30, so as to check out the competition.
- c. You arrive a few minutes before 4:00.

## 6. While you wait in the outer office:

- a. Be friendly and relaxed,



- but sit properly.
- b. Hunt for a corner and sit down.
- c. Who cares? The receptionist isn't doing the hiring.

**7. When you meet the interviewer:**

- a. Say hi and sit down as soon as possible.
- b. Give him/her a firm handshake and a big smile.
- c. Tell him/her all about yourself.

**8. If you don't know how to respond to a question:**

- a. Fake it.
- b. Be honest.
- c. Repeat the question for clarification.

**9. Which of the following are typical interview questions?**

- a. What skills have you developed that are relevant to this position?
- b. Who is your role model and why?
- c. Where do you want to be in five years?

**10. When the interviewer says he/she will let you know in three days, you:**

- a. Wait for him/her to call.
- b. Call the next day to demonstrate your enthusiasm for the job.
- c. Hang around the office on the third day to make it easy for him/her to contact you.

## ANSWERS

**1. b.** The first step is to do your research. What services does the company offer? How long has it been in business? How many people does it employ? Read any promotional information you can find.

**2. c.** By now you know the answer to number 2. It will impress the interviewer that you are interested enough in the job to take the time to learn something about their business.

## DON'T TRY TO PAD YOUR RÉSUMÉ WITH MISLEADING INFORMATION.

**3. a, b, c.** All the answers are correct. You'll need a résumé that includes your educational background, your skills, your experience in related fields, your interests, etc. Ask your school counselor for information on writing a simple résumé.

List your strengths and weaknesses. You may be competent taking care of children, but you might not really enjoy it. Knowing such information about yourself will keep you from getting into a job you would hate. Or you may love working with computers, but hate physical exercise. You wouldn't want to try for a job as an exercise trainer, right?

And make sure your hair looks its very best. First impressions are everything.

**4. c.** Sorry, but grungy won't cut it. Dress a little nicer than you would if you got the job. Plan your outfit carefully. Keep it simple. Avoid bangly jewelry, perfumes, heavy makeup. Stick to plain, dark colors. Navy blue is a good choice.

**5. c.** Being late for an interview tells the interviewer that you will probably be equally as careless with the company work hours. Arriving a half hour early to check out the competition is a no-no as well. The last thing a business appreciates is having someone just hanging around for no apparent reason. However, by arriving a few minutes early, you will have time to grow accustomed to your surroundings and to gather up your confidence.

**6. a.** Being friendly to the receptionist is more important than you may think. Sixty percent of the largest U.S. corporations consider the opinions of their

secretaries or receptionists regarding job applications.

**7. b.** A firm handshake shows confidence. A friendly smile not only helps you relax, but also builds rapport with your interviewer. Never sit until the interviewer beckons you to do so.

Three other tips are: lean slightly forward so that you look alert and interested, maintain eye contact without trying to stare the person down, and listen closely to what the interviewer has to say.

Give the interviewer only information pertinent to the job. Your being the oldest of four children is important if you are applying for a child-care job, but would be useless information if your job is to assist in a medical lab.

**8. b, c.** Be honest. Don't lie or try to pad your résumé with false or misleading information. Sooner or later this will come back to bite you on your reputation. And don't overload your interview with unimportant information.

**9. a, b, c.** All are possible questions. Two more questions to plan for are Tell me about yourself, and What do you think you do best? Practice your interview at home. Think through how you would answer different questions. If possible, videotape your practice interview. Seeing yourself will help you identify any irritating or nervous habits you might have and not know about.

**10. a.** Wait for the interviewer to call. If the promised time passes without word, then call. However, be sure your tone is pleasant and not aggressive. And remember, it isn't always your fault when you don't get a particular job. Don't beat up on yourself. Just shrug your shoulders and move on to the next interview.

Job interviews are always scary. But with a little information and planning you can quiet the worst of your fears and possibly land the job of your dreams. ▀





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# JAMES SHOOK THE CAN AND POPPED THE LID . . . THE SMELL OF LEMONS FILLED THE CAR.

B Y K R I S T I N \*

I freaked when I heard the horn blow from my driveway. "Oh, no!" I said, staring at Nadia's reflection in the mirror. "It's already 7:00. They're here."

It was my first time out with Matt, and I was nervous. I hardly knew him; he was so quiet. And it was Nadia's first date with James. I didn't like James. He had a reputation of hooking his girlfriends on booze and getting them high. Every time I tried explaining this to Nadia, she kept shooting back with "But he's so nice to me. He wouldn't do that." I gave up. Though we were best friends and like sisters, her ignorance could drive me crazy.

"Dad," I yelled down the hallway, "after the football game,

we'll be going out to eat. I'll try to be home on time."

"Hey, Kristin!" Dad's voice echoed throughout the house. "Just make sure you take enough money, and . . . call us if you get into trouble."

"We'll be fine, Dad," I said. He always said stuff like that.

Nadia helped me arrange my hair one last time; then we strolled out the front door. Her long, brown hair swung in front of me.

James opened the door and pulled his seat forward. "What's up?" he asked.

"Not much," I said, climbing into the rusty, blue Mustang after Nadia. Matt turned and smiled at me. I said hi, then turned my attention to Nadia. My hands were freezing, but the evening air was warm. The car reeked of lemons. It was weird.

"Isn't this cool?" James asked. "Matt and I are best friends, and you two are best friends. And this is your first time out with us.

Well, girls, this is your lucky night."

Matt drove onto the main road and headed for our school. Then he zipped past the football field entrance.

"Uh, guys," I said, "the game is back there."

James and Matt laughed at my lack of perception.

"Matt, hang a right up here," James ordered.

Matt slowed and turned into a graveyard.

"OK," I said. "Like, what are we doing in a cemetery?"

"It's party time," James said, grinning.

Matt coasted along a row of grave markers, then parked. Long shadows stretched from the trees and past tall statues. My hands felt clammy. I was totally confused.

Then James reached underneath his seat and pulled out a plastic bag. I heard cans clinking as he dropped the bag onto his lap. He pulled out four aerosol

# COOL AND COLD



cans of air freshener and four white folded rags.

"Planning to freshen up the dead, James?" I asked by way of a joke. Nadia and I giggled.

"Not quite, girls," said James rather abruptly. "I'm going to show you how to freshen up your minds. Have you ever inhaled?"

"Inhaled what?" Nadia said, looking just a bit too innocent.

"No!" I cut in. "And we don't plan on learning, thank you very much." I knew exactly what he was talking about. My stomach tightened at the idea.

"Chill out, Kristin," James said. "Let Nadia speak for herself. Well, Nadia, do you want to try it?"

"I don't get it," she said.

"Check it out," James said. "Plenty of kids do it. This is the coolest rush: no drugs, no booze."

"How do we do this?" Nadia asked.

"Watch," he said.

I couldn't believe her. I felt betrayed.

James shook the can and popped off the lid. He fooled around a bit with the rag and the can, breathing deeply. The smell of lemons filled the car. I was afraid and disgusted.

James repeated his skit two more times.

"I'm psyched," he said. "This is totally awesome!" He fell back against the passenger door.

"Wow!" Nadia said. "What does it feel like?"

Matt finally spoke. "It's really cool."

"It's really *uncool*," I said.

"Don't listen to them, Nadia."

"Is it bad for us, James?" she asked.

"Nadia, where's your head?" I replied.

"Trust me," James said. "If it was going to kill us, it'd be illegal. I wouldn't talk you into

## NADIA'S GLASSY EYES ROLLED BACK INTO HER HEAD . . . HER BODY SHOOK . . .

anything like that. Besides, I've been doing it for about a month, and look, I'm totally fine."

"You're messed up in the head," I told him. "And you're trying to mess up Nadia, too. Can we, like, get out of here?" I looked at Matt. He turned to James for support.

"Oh, come on, Kristin. Lighten up," Nadia said. She slapped my leg. "James isn't trying to hurt us. One time won't kill us. Don't be such a downer."

I crossed my arms over my chest and glared at her. Why couldn't she figure out how stupid it was? "You guys have your little fun," I said, "but keep me out of it." I wanted to leave our so-called dates. Nadia was really disappointing me too. What did this mean for our friendship?

I watched her inhale the air freshener for about a half hour. As cans were emptied, James pulled out more.

"You gotta try this, Kristin," Nadia garbled. "It's wild."

"No thanks," I said. I was disgusted and wanted to stop her, but I decided not to sound like a mother anymore.

Nadia took another long, deep breath. Suddenly she fell back against the seat and crossed her arms, clutching her shoulders. Then she rocked forward and threw up on the floor. She was breathing hard.

"Kristin," she said.

"Nadia, what's wrong?" I asked.

"Oh, Kristin. Help me. I'm

dizzy . . . my chest . . . Oh, I'm scared!"

"Nadia, say something!" My heart pounded.

Nadia's glassy eyes rolled back into her head. Her body shook; then she threw up again.

I grabbed her arm. "Nadia, what's happening to you?"

Matt and James sat there, staring. I pulled myself closer and wrapped my arm around her. She stopped shaking and went limp. Her head fell on my shoulder like a baby's. A chill ran up my back, and tears rushed down my cheeks. Nadia was limp in my arms. "Do something, you guys," I said.

James whimpered, "Oh, no. This is all our fault, Matt." He spun around and looked out the window. "We've got to get out of here." He flung the passenger door open and fell out onto the ground, crawling before he tore off out of sight.

"James!" Matt shouted.

"Forget that idiot, Matt," I shouted. "We've got to get Nadia to a hospital. But you're too wasted to drive. Get back here and hold her. I'll drive." Matt and I switched places . . .



Four days later I was in the cemetery again with Nadia. The sky was covered with gray clouds, and the rain mixed with the tears running down my face. My dad held me close as I gazed over Nadia's casket. "Why?" I whispered. "Why did I let her do this?" My hands were numb. I was cold and exhausted. "I could have stopped her, but I didn't. I was stupid. She was stupid."

The sound of soft rain through the trees filled my ears. I was the last to say goodbye to my best friend. I turned and walked away. ▀

\*Kristin is a pseudonym.



**F**or 15-year-old Jeff the choice was tragically simple: either be like his friends and do what they were doing, or be different and refuse. Though Jeff knew what his friends were doing was wrong, though his conscience was screaming at him to leave, he squelched the voice and, sadly, decided to go with the crowd.

It was a mistake. The last he ever made.

What Jeff's friends were doing was breathing inhalants. They had all gathered after class on Friday afternoon in the back of Steve's house. Seventeen-year-old Steve was the oldest of the group, a senior, a top athlete, and the most popular guy in school. Jeff thought himself hot stuff merely because Steve would even associate with him. Jeff's other friends, those of his own age, were amazed and impressed that Jeff was now buddies with Steve Hanson. Jeff was amazed too, and didn't want to do anything to ruin that friendship, even if it meant doing things he knew in his heart were wrong—things like sniffing inhalants.

Some of the other kids there had soaked clothes with lighter fluid; others were sniffing fabric protector fluid from plastic bags. Jeff's choice was something else: he placed contact cement inside his gym bag, put his head in the bag, and got a rush. It didn't last very long though: within 15 minutes Jeff was dead.

In some parts of the United States it's called "huffing"; in other areas it's called "sniffing." But whatever the name, one thing's for sure: kids who mess with inhalants are putting deadly chemicals inside

their bodies, chemicals that in the long run—or even the short run (as in Jeff's case)—will only harm them.

All across the country inhalant use is on the upswing. This is bad news, for inhalants are some of the most deadly and dangerous of all drugs. Of course, any choice to use drugs of any kind is bad enough. But the choice to use inhalants is one of the worst of all.

"I don't think anybody knows for sure," said Dr. Neil Rosenberg, of the International Institute of Inhalant Abuse in Englewood, Colorado, "why inhalant abuse is up. There is some validity to the fact that because we are a society that encourages stimulants, children and teenagers are clearly following examples. There are about 1,400 products that are potentially abusable as inhalants."

Some of these products are paint, lacquer, butane, propane, correction fluid, marking pens, nail polish, air-brush propellants, gasoline, lighter fluid, airplane glue, cooking spray, even the nitrous oxide found in whipped cream cans. All these products also

hardware store, grocery, or gas station.

Of course, being legal doesn't make these substances safe. Marijuana can mess you up bad and cause real health problems, but few people ever die from a marijuana overdose. In contrast, according to Alan Leshner, of the National Institute of Drug Abuse, it's estimated that every year about 1,000 teenagers die from inhalant



# NO LAUGHING MATTER

have one thing in common: unlike LSD, cocaine, marijuana, and heroin, these are legal. In other words, you don't have to stand in some dark alley, or hide in the back of a van, or risk getting arrested to purchase them. Kids on a misguided quest for a high have sometimes just walked into a local

**Inhalants make sense only if you ignore the plain facts.**



use. Thousands more damage their minds and bodies to one degree or another.

One recent survey estimated that about 7 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 have used inhalants, 21 percent of them by the eighth grade. The average age at which they start is only 13. According to Richard Bonnette, of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, more teenagers experiment with inhalants than any other drug. One federal report claims that as many as 17 percent of all high school seniors abuse inhalants on a regular basis, second only to alcohol.

"Few parents understand the size and scope of this problem," Bonnette warns.

Another dangerous fad is the abuse of nitrous oxide, commonly known as laughing gas. Sadly, though, it's no laughing matter. Users often get it from cans of whipped cream, freely sold in supermarkets. The street name for it is "whip-its." Police in Maryland recently reported finding more than 100 cans of whipped cream at a party. It wasn't for a birthday cake, however; the cans were filled with the cream, but the nitrous oxide was depleted. To increase the rush, some kids concentrate the vapor inhalation in various ways. Since their techniques can cause the person to lose consciousness, there is the very real danger of asphyxiation. Of course, nitrous oxide itself is addictive and can cause serious heart, lung, and brain damage. (The argument can be made humorously that you need brain damage even to mess with the stuff.)

But whipped cream cans are not the only source of nitrous oxide. Last year four young men died in their pickup truck after inhaling nitrous oxide from a four-foot-long canister. And two young women were found dead in the storeroom of a dental clinic in

Utah, again from using nitrous oxide. The simple cartoon character gas can indeed be a serious killer.

There are so many different types of inhalants, and the physical effects of each are different. Some are worse than others, and of course all are potentially fatal. One researcher has said that some kids often seek out the products with the harmful labels, thinking these will give them the biggest rush. In fact, it's often the warning labels themselves that draw users to the products.

"Sometimes we find that the children look for those warnings to use the products," said Ralph Engel, of the Chemical Specialties Manufacturers Association.

Yet whatever the inhalant,

## INHALANTS CAN REMAIN LODGED IN THE BRAIN FOR SIX MONTHS.



whether hair spray or nail polish remover, they all contain chemicals that can damage the human body, from the kidneys to the brain. Users expose themselves to chemicals at a rate far exceeding the

limits permitted in industrial settings. Thus these kids are placing in their bodies chemicals that are so dangerous the government has laws forbidding workers in a factory from being exposed to them.

Inhalant use can be deadly for a number of reasons. Oftentimes inhalants tend to starve the body of oxygen, or they force the heart to beat more rapidly and erratically. In either case they can kill.

All inhalants contain dangerous chemicals, but when a group of these chemicals are taken into the body at once, they can become even more dangerous, especially in younger people.

Another problem is that while some drugs are quickly eliminated from the body, inhalants can remain lodged in the brain for six months.

Why then would anyone put such dangerous chemicals into their body just for a rush? Many who study the problem believe that it's because few kids are given accurate information about the dangers of inhalants. They are warned against LDS, cocaine, crack, heroin, and pot, but not inhalants.

"Nobody ever taught me about using inhalants," goes an ad against inhalant abuse. "They never taught me that sniffing stuff like airplane glue or fingernail polish remover or correction fluid could make my grades suffer. Or I'd become moody and irritable. . . . They never taught me it could ruin almost every vital organ in my body and cause permanent damage to my brain. They never taught me it could kill me the first time I tried it. But since nobody ever taught me this, I guess I'll just have to learn it on my own."

Don't. Save yourself the trouble.

If only Jeff had known the facts and said no. He never meant to die. ■





# YO! JENNY

Listen up, teens. Say Hi to Jennifer Acklam, a Miss Texas Coed and America's Homecoming Queen. Jenny wants to hear from you. Send your letters to us at **LISTEN** magazine, P.O. Box 859, Hagerstown, MD 21741, and we'll pass them on to her for the column.

**I think my brother gets everything he wants. He gets all the good stuff from my dad and stepmom. I think my stepmom is trying to get back at me. She blames everything on me. I have this hate built up in my heart. I try to be nice, but she is so mean! Why? Jeanette.**

Don't feel alone in your problem. Many kids with blended families (that means a real parent and a stepparent) feel the same way you

do. In fact, lots of kids living with both of their birth parents feel that their brother or sister is being treated better than they are by their mom or dad. This is a normal feeling growing up. In a blended family it often takes time for everyone to get to know and feel comfortable around one another. While this is happening at different rates for different relationships, it will feel unbalanced and unfair. Be patient and give your stepmother some time. Maybe in the meantime

you could talk to your dad about your feelings. I'm sure he could build a good bridge between you and your stepmom.

**A few of my friends went to a party and had too many drinks. Unfortunately, as the night grew on, they started to act really dumb, and the whole party decided to play strip poker. They lost pretty bad and ended up naked with every single guy at our school watching them. When they came to school the next day, they realized that everyone had been talking about them. They were pretty stressed about it. I feel that if I had been there I could have done something to stop this. I feel so helpless. Jill.**

Your friends are learning one of the hardest lessons about growing up: that there are *always* consequences to one's behavior. Your friends made a mistake in drinking and then losing their inhibitions and behaving foolishly and immorally. Unfortunately, this behavior can be costly in terms of reputation and self-esteem. It takes a long time to climb back up the mountain of self-respect after an episode like this, but it *can* be done! They will have to endure the harsh criticism and "slams" from their classmates for a while. In the meantime, if they hope to restore the respect and esteem of their peers, they will have to *prove* that their foolish behavior that night is *not* something they will *ever* repeat and that they *do* feel shame and regret about it. In time the other students will

move on and quit the teasing if they see that these girls are not going to make the same mistake again. As for your part, you are being a great friend by being loyal to them in their time of embarrassment. Don't feel responsible for their actions, though; in life each person *must* take ownership and responsibility for his/her own mistakes and behavior.

**I've had a really close friend for four years. Suddenly she became "in" with the wrong crowd. She's on lots of drugs and dresses satanic. She also hates me for trying to keep her from the drugs. Should I just let her go? What should I do? KC**

When someone chooses to leave his/her good friend and start hanging out with the wrong crowd, it hurts deeply. Letting your friend go may be the only thing you can do if talking to her and trying to convince her to give up drugs and her satanic dress doesn't work. Make it clear to her that you still want to be her friend, and you care about her, but that you can't and won't accept her new lifestyle. If she chooses to hang out with this rebellious group, let her go. Hopefully she will soon realize that she has made a bad choice and will want to reestablish her friendship with you. **Go about your life in a positive, healthy, wholesome way, and let her see all the good things she is missing in life. Sometimes a good role model and a sharp contrast can be the best wake-up call in helping someone get his/her life back on track.**



# Bryan White





## *Bryan White is hot property number one*

**T**he past few years have been a whirlwind ride for Bryan White . . . not that he's complaining, mind you.

His debut album, *Bryan White*, released in August 1994, was certified gold (500,000 sold) and spawned two number one singles, "Rebecca Lynn" and "Someone Else's Star." He was named New Male Vocalist by the Academy of Country Music in 1996, the same year his second album, *Between Now and Forever*, was released. This rapid rise to stardom is almost mind-boggling until you realize that actually Bryan's been preparing for this his whole life.

The son of musician parents (his mother, Anita, performed with a rhythm and blues band in clubs in and around Oklahoma City, where Bryan grew up, while his father, Wilford "Bud" White, played classic country music), Bryan was playing drums by age 5 and performing in clubs with his folks by age 13.

# AND HE SINGS, TOO!



• Talented Bryan White won the 1996 Country Music Association's Horizon Award as country music's top new artist.

"A musician can't just like one style of music," he says. "I listened to a lot of stuff growing up. I liked the Eagles, Richard Marx, and Chicago, although I never liked a lot of heavy rock music. I like pop music and some rock and roll, but country music is the most relatable music to me," Bryan explains. "I don't know if there are songs with a lot of meat and substance coming out of the pop music world."

"Country music singer Steve Wariner was the biggest influence I ever had as far (continued on page 18)

# AUDREY T. HINGLEY





as music goes," maintains Bryan. "I always went to his shows whenever he came to town. I had never heard a voice that great."

Today the one-time fan counts his idol as a friend, and the admiration is mutual. Wariner says of Bryan, "I think he's definitely on his way to being the next big superstar."

Not that everything about Bryan's life and pursuit of music has been idyllic. His parents divorced when he was 5, and even though the divorce was amicable, Bryan and his younger brother, Daniel, had to cope with the effects of a broken home.

"Emotionally my parents' divorce didn't get hold of me as bad as it would have if it had happened later," remembers Bryan. "When they divorced it just didn't bother me as bad, because I was so young," says Bryan, now 22. "The biggest effect was that I did a lot of moving around Oklahoma City, because I was going back and forth between my parents. I'd make friends, then I'd have to leave and change school districts."

Though it may be hard to believe today, Bryan describes himself as "very shy and bashful" in high school. "If I got to know someone, I was talkative, but basically I was really shy. This business brought me out of my shell," he maintains.

Another thing that helped Bryan during his high school years was the lack of cliques at his school. "Everybody got along with everybody," he insists. "You'd see a White guy with a cowboy hat hanging out with a Black guy with baggy jeans. Everybody was pretty cool at our school."

That atmosphere especially helped when it came to his stand on tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Even though he had friends that drank, Bryan chose not to and says his high school buddies

**"I**'ve never done drugs . . . drugs are a scary thing to me," White says. . . .

"No matter what I say, it won't change the world, but how cool is ruining your life or being dead? How cool is that? I tell them to think about the consequences if someone tries to pressure them into something."



accepted his decision without trying to pressure him. His stand has continued: a Bryan White tour includes a no-drinking, no-drugs, no-cigarettes policy for Bryan and his bandmates. As he told a Chicago *Tribune* interviewer, "I won't record anything about drinking, and I would never sing about anything to do with violence or cheating or anything like that."

"I've never done drugs . . . drugs are a scary thing to me," he maintains. "I'd rather drink a soda than a beer. No matter what I say, I won't change the world, but how cool is ruining your life or being dead? How cool is that? I tell kids to think about the consequences if someone tries to pressure them into something."

Bryan takes seriously his responsibility of being a role model for young people. People who know him well say he's simply a genuinely nice guy.

"I have gotten where I am by being who I am and treating people the way I want to be treated," he says. "It's not an 'image' thing, it's just how I am."

The brown-haired, hazel-green-eyed singer does not shun his legions of teenage fans. Although he says he doesn't know how to react to the "teen heartthrob" label the media has tagged him with, the young bachelor—with no steady girl at present—admits with a laugh that getting to meet female fans is "pretty cool."

Many of his early performances were in clubs that were obviously off-limits to teens. Bryan responded by adding afternoon alcohol-free concerts to accommodate underage fans who would gather outside in club parking lots.

"I don't really have to do that now, because we're playing a lot of fairs and festivals where teenagers can come to see us," he explains.

Bryan started writing songs at 17, recording a few things he had written on demo records. The

## A BRYAN WHITE TOUR INCLUDES A NO-DRINKING, NO-DRUGS, NO-CIGARETTES POLICY FOR BRYAN AND HIS BANDMATES.

brother of one of his musician friends knew Nashville songwriter Reese Wilson. Naturally the friend made sure that Wilson got to hear some of Bryan's demo records.

"Reese called back and said they were great, that he'd woke up a couple people in the middle of the night to play my songs for them! That was very promising to me," Bryan recalls.

At the same time, Bryan's father—who continues to play country music full-time on the club circuit—put his son in touch with renowned guitarist Billy Joe Walker, Jr., who was looking for a new act to produce.

"Billy Joe called after he heard my stuff, and said he really liked it too. So I had encouraging words from two different sources," Bryan explains.

Following high school graduation, Bryan borrowed his grandfather's car and drove to Nashville for a week's visit. By the time he returned home to Oklahoma City, his mind was made up: he'd move to Music City and pursue his dream. He made the move in October of 1992.

"I just had some encouragement; I had no promises. I had \$500, and once I spent that I started gettin' scared," he admits. "My family had to start sending me money."

He found a cleaning job at a club. The owner took a liking to the shy 18-year-old, sometimes letting him sing with the band. The job lasted only a month, but

helped pay some bills. He found more enjoyable work as a singer on the demo tapes that songwriters make to pitch their songs to artists.

"I was paid \$40 per song for singing demos, and if you could stack 'em up, you could do OK," Bryan remembers. "Doing the demos helped get my name and voice around town."

He also sold T-shirts on the road for Pearl River, a country group whose members now comprise his backup band. Eventually Reese Wilson took him to Glen Campbell Music, a music publishing house, where Bryan was introduced to Marty Gamblin, the man who is now his manager. By April 1993, six months after he'd arrived in Nashville, Bryan had a staff songwriter job at Glen Campbell Music, and by the summer, Asylum Records had signed him to a recording contract.

Although his star has risen in a relatively short time, Bryan stresses that seeking musical stardom remains a gamble.

"Even now there's no guarantee of anything. But you always hear people saying 'Put your mind to it and you can do anything,' and that's really true. Practice, be the best player or singer you can be, and get out there and do it," he advises. "Believe in what you do."

Bryan lives in Nashville but remains close to his parents, grandparents, and brother. He enjoys going to movies, freshwater fishing, and "playing" in his home studio. He has lent his name to a number of charitable causes and benefit albums. He also recorded "When You Wish Upon a Star" for an upcoming Walt Disney country album, an apt choice considering his own rise to fame.

"I want to reach a wider format of people with my music, and I want to be accepted 20 years down the road," Bryan says of the future.

For Bryan White, the future seems golden indeed. ▀



BY  
MARILYN KAY  
ALLANSON

# GET A JOB

## WAYS TO MAKE THE JOB MARKET WORK FOR YOU.

**S**o you need a job. What do you do now? Where do you look, and what can you do? And what if there are no jobs out there for you? What then?

For starters, look in the want ads of any newspaper and on bulletin boards at stores or malls. And of course there are always employment agencies. But jobs that are advertised often have

well worth it.

The first thing you need to do is take a personal inventory. Some of the questions you can ask yourself are:

- 1. What are my marketable skills?
- 2. What equipment do I have to work with, if any?
- 3. Can I utilize any of my hobbies, etc?
- 4. What amount of time do I



certain age groups in mind or require certain skills.

If there is nothing offered that suits your abilities or needs, you could be really creative and produce your own job. This might take a little more effort on your part, but the end results will be

have to work around?

- 5. Am I physically strong enough to do certain jobs?
- 6. What kind of pay am I looking at?
- 7. Am I willing to take orders from others, even if I think they are wrong?

- 8. What jobs am I not willing to do?
- 9. Do I have the cash to start my own business?

Look first for jobs in your own neighborhood. With a pen and clipboard take a slow walk around your neighborhood. Take note of what is happening in your area.

- 1. What do the lawns and gardens look like?
  - a. lawn care: grass cutting, reseeding, raking, fertilizing.
  - b. sod laying.
  - c. rock or dirt hauling.
  - d. flower beds: planting, weeding, watering.
- 2. Do the homes/garages/sheds, etc., need to be painted?
- 3. Do the neighbors have pets?
- 4. What are the age levels and incomes for each household?
- 5. Do you ever see others (e.g., contractors) doing work for these people?
- 6. Do they have children?

**For your next step, create a questionnaire and distribute it to the neighbors.** This is a simple way of finding out if your neighbors are willing to pay someone else to do jobs that they may not have time for or may not wish to do themselves. Give a date and time that you will be back to pick up the questionnaires. Once you have the answered questionnaires, you should go through them and see what you are capable of doing.

There may just be enough work in the neighborhood to keep you busy. Take time to sort out the information. It's best to break it down into specific jobs. For example:

- 1. **Lawn jobs:** cutting, raking, seeding, etc., can all fall under lawn care.
- 2. **Pets:** walking, bathing/brushing, feeding, or baby-sitting them can all fall under pet care.
- 3. **Gardens:** weeding, digging, planting, bringing in produce, etc., can all fall under garden work.



For your next step you need to create a flyer stating the jobs you are willing to do, the equipment or facilities you have available, the hours you are available, what you charge an hour or per job, your address, phone number, and name, and, last but not least, your qualifications. Distribute the flyers door-to-door, delivering them personally to each household or placing them in the door. You could also place flyers under windshield wipers on parked cars around town.

Then while waiting for the calls to come in, prepare a schedule, broken down into days and times, with space for listing your new job, who it is for, the job to be done, pay, time and place, etc.

Always keep in mind the different types of jobs for each season. For example:

**Winter:** shoveling snow, clearing skating rinks, clearing buildup of ice, cleaning snow and ice off of roofs, cleaning up outside after pets, putting up outside Christmas decorations, delivering Christmas trees, delivering Christmas presents, doing shopping for shut-ins, filling outside bird feeders.

**Spring:** digging flower beds or gardens, planting bulbs, washing windows, helping plant gardens, opening up camps or cottages, taking boats out of storage, washing and cleaning automobiles, taking covers off of trees and perennials and furniture and storing them for the fall.

**Summer:** cutting grass, washing windows, watering flowers, helping take care of gardens, picking vegetables, cleaning docks and boathouses, taking children to the beach or park, painting fences or mending them.

**Fall:** raking leaves, covering perennials and shrubs, bringing in produce, storing boats for winter, putting lawn furniture, etc., away,

splitting and hauling in a winter supply of firewood.

Your list of job possibilities can easily be expanded. Think of such things as walking pets, baby-sitting children and pets, even baby-sitting homes and gardens or indoor plants, washing windows inside, washing walls or floors. Such things always need to be done and are often overlooked as a means of earning money.

Another option you might consider is to start a small business. Of course, this will

## A BUSINESS PLAN WILL REQUIRE YOU TO LOOK AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES AND NEEDS.



require a little more study, a bit of money up front, and a lot of hard work and self-discipline, for you will be your own boss. You need to check on the laws in your area—for example, there might be some age restrictions to setting up a business.

Again, a business plan will require you to look around your neighborhood or town and do some research into the business in question. A few ideas for small

businesses are:

- ☐ 1. ice-cream wagon
- ☐ 2. snack cart
- ☐ 3. woodcutting
- ☐ 4. sod-laying/seeding/fertilizing (total lawn-care service)
- ☐ 5. garden-tilling service (spring and fall)
- ☐ 6. giving swimming lessons (privately)
- ☐ 7. teaching crafts
- ☐ 8. tutoring adults and students
- ☐ 9. home-care help for shut-ins, etc.
- ☐ 10. pet care (bathing, walking, grooming, etc.)
- ☐ 11. sewing (mending or creating new items)
- ☐ 12. buying gifts (for those unable to shop), wrapping and delivering things for some of today's busy people
- ☐ 13. delivery service

There is a job waiting out there for every person who is willing to search for it. The question is How badly do you want a job, and are

you really willing to work for it and at it?

To create your own job you need to look around, listen carefully, and put your energy and the need for a job into motion. With that new job, the money will start to trickle in.

The choices are limited only by your own imagination. Trust and believe in yourself and make it happen.

Happy job hunting! ▀



# SELF-HELP THE PRESSURE ON TEENS



**T**hese days it has become harder for young adults to resist the temptation to try cigarettes and other types of drugs. The pressure from friends and media greatly influences the lives of many people. I myself have been confronted with smoking and been offered drugs, although I have never taken that opportunity. I intend

**"IF ANYONE TRIES TO GET YOU TO DO SOMETHING YOU DON'T WANT TO DO, THEN THEY'RE NOT A TRUE FRIEND. I BELIEVE THAT TRUE FRIENDS WILL RESPECT YOUR DECISION NO MATTER WHAT."**

on staying drug-free. However, some people aren't as lucky.

Peer pressure is a major reason young adults try drugs and smoking. Friends may try to get you to try something even though you may not want it. They may try to persuade you to try it, and they'll tell you how

good it is, although they may not tell you about all the disadvantages there are to doing drugs or smoking. People are confronted with the pressure at school, at parties, and at hangouts. If anyone tries to get you to do something you don't want to do, then they're not a true friend. I believe that true friends will respect your decision no matter what.

The media often portrays people smoking or drinking as having a good time. They don't realize that their advertisements influence many people's lives. A cigarette company's target is the younger generation, because once a company has gotten them to buy their product, they know they've gotten a customer for life.

It's up to you to reject the common view of "If you smoke, drink, or do any other kind of drugs, then you will have a good time." If your peers ever approach you with the idea of taking drugs, it is your decision and no one else's. It is your life you could be endangering. Do what you think is the smart and intelligent thing to do. Say no!

Christine Hortian, 14  
Congers, New York

## PRIZE T-SHIRTS

by Patricia Eckel,

Young Adult Youth Coordinator, Berlin Township Public Library, Berlin Heights, Ohio

We thought your readers would enjoy meeting our two prizewinners in our summer reading program for young adults. Both Andrea and Stacey received great *Listen* T-shirts for the winning efforts.

Our program was a great success this year, and your magazine received good reviews from the kids. We look forward to every issue of your magazine, and I personally will continue to promote *Listen* to my young adult patrons. ▽



Stacey Little, 12, with her winning *LISTEN* T-shirt. Stacy is a seventh grader at Western Reserve Middle School in Collins, Ohio.



Andrea Granville, 14, with her winning *LISTEN* T-shirt she received during Young Adult Summer Reading Program. She is a ninth grader at Edison High School in Milan, Ohio.



Some months ago *Listen* profiled top-speed skater Theresa Cliff. Well, Theresa is continuing her winning ways.

A little more than a year ago at the in-line speed skating world championships held in Perth, Australia, Theresa Cliff, 17, of Cedar Springs, Michigan, and Julie Brandt, 16, of Jenison, Michigan, represented one half of the U.S. female delegation and competed against 26 other countries, for a combined total of seven medals.

Theresa, in her second year on the U.S. world team, earned four gold medals with first-place finishes in the 3,000- and 10,000-meter banked track races, the 5,000-meter road race, and the three-person 5,000-meter banked track relay. Cliff also picked up a silver medal in the 1,500-meter banked track race.

Julie, in her first year on the U.S. world team, earned a gold medal with a first-place finish in the 500-meter banked track race and a silver in the 500-meter road race.

Julie, sponsored by Ultimate, and Theresa, sponsored by Geo Rollerblade, have been traveling throughout the United States competing in indoor and outdoor speed skating events. Late last year the pair made the U.S. world team and competed at the 1996 world championships near Venice, Italy. As we tucked this issue away, their medal tally had just come in. Talk

# Prime Times

REAL PEOPLE SPEAKING OUT AGAINST DRUGS

## GOLD FROM DOWN UNDER

by Paul Adams

*Speedsters Theresa Cliff and Julie Brandt win big in Australia at the World In-Line Skating Championships.*



*Heavy medals: Michigan in-line speed skaters Julie Brandt (left) and Theresa Cliff (right) are world-class winners. (Far right): Triumphant Theresa wheels a postcompetition flag-carrying victory lap.*

about winning personalities.

Julie Brandt won two gold medals: one in the 1,500-meter track and another in the 5,000-meter women's relay track event.

Theresa won gold in both the 5,000-meter race (total points) and the 5,000-meter women's relay. And she earned silver for the 1,500-meter and 10,000-meter

events, and bronze medals for the 3,000-meter, the 5,000-meter road race (total points), and the 10,000-meter road race.

Both young women are from the Grand Rapids, Michigan, area. There were only four other U.S. women competing in the world championships. ▀



AM INCREDIBLE

FIT GET





**T**he first time that I tried it I was 13 years old, and I was very nervous. I mean, I'd never done anything like it before, and I wasn't even sure that I'd know how. I knew that kids a lot younger than I were already doing it, but that knowledge didn't do anything to ease my fears. I knew that there were dangers involved, but I also knew that some people did it well into their 50s and 60s without any negative experiences. My friends had been raving about how great it was. They'd all tried it at least once and loved it. Even Bobby, who doesn't usually experiment with anything new, enjoyed it.

Bobby's been my closest friend ever since kindergarten. Our parents say that we act more like brothers than friends. Bobby and I have lived only three houses away from each other for as long as I can remember. There is hardly anything that one of us will do that we won't involve the other one in.

My name is Harry, but all of my buddies call me Sparky. I like to think it's because I'm as fast as lightning, but I'd only be kidding myself. I got the nickname when I was in the first grade. I'd been told not to play with matches, but I did it anyway, and wound up burning the skin off of the thumb on my right hand. That's the day that I got a permanent scar, a one-month grounding, and the nickname "Sparky."

Terry is the oldest one in our group. He's the one who first approached me about doing it. Actually, Terry seems to be first at doing everything. He was the first one in our group to get his own bicycle, the first one to join a baseball league, and the first one to kiss a girl.

When he first approached me about doing it, I said, "No way." He was absolutely addicted to it, though, and he didn't want to take no for an answer. His older brother had introduced him to it when he was just a little kid, and now it seemed as if he just couldn't get enough of it.

"Come on, man. I promise you won't regret it," he'd said. "If you don't like it, that's cool, but you gotta at least try it. Everyone else has."

"I don't know," I said. "I..."

"Come on. You chicken or something?" Rudy threw his two cents' worth in.

"Who you callin' chicken?" I snapped back and walked over to stare him in the eyes. Rudy's nickname is "The Beast." He's as big and strong as anyone I've ever met, and he'd have absolutely no problem breaking my body into tiny little pieces. I'm kind of small. Rudy's sort of protective of me because of my size, so we both knew that I wasn't really challenging him. It was kind of a joke between us. I'd pretend I was



• People from all walks of life are experiencing that wonderful "top of the world" feeling, including some famous faces. (Top) Brooke Shields skiing in Sun Valley, Idaho.



going to kick him, and he'd pretend he actually cared.

"Sit down before you hurt yourself, Pee-Wee," he said. "You gonna do it, or should we find someone braver than you to ask? Like maybe your little sister."

"I'll do it," I said with very little confidence in my voice.

So much for being able to resist peer pressure. They sure make it sound simple with all that talk about "just saying no," but putting it into practice is a lot harder than it sounds.

We agreed to do it on Sunday.  
(continued on page 28)



# LISTENING

FEEDBACK FROM OUR READERS



PHOTOS: MARK LISK / ART DIRECTION: ED GUTHERO

## HOLD ON TO YOUR DREAM : HOVERING TREE

Have you ever had a doubt  
that your dream will not come true?  
Don't let go of your dream,  
no matter what you do.  
If you hold on to your dream,  
hold on with all your heart.  
If you work with all your might,  
it will not fall apart.  
Knowing that it's there  
is one way to go,  
But striving for your dream  
is yet another show.  
Saying yes to your dream  
and no to your doubt,  
You'll find out in the end  
what faith is all about.  
Just hold on to your dream  
close to your heart.  
Working for your dream  
is the best way to start.

Kim Greenwell, 20  
House Springs, Missouri

- An old birch tree,  
perched on the top of the hill,  
leaves whistling in the wind,  
like a hovering tree.
- I sit there  
under its shadows,  
thinking about the past,  
and where I can go with the future.
- I've wept there  
over hard times,  
and somehow that tree's  
helped me through them.
- I sit there now,  
resting on the trunk  
with my head up to the sky,  
thinking *Why, oh, why,*  
*Dad, did you chop it down?*  
My tree—my tree on the top of the hill  
is now nothing but a stump.  
My tree—is gone.

Johan Jefferson, Jr., 16  
Kutztown, Pennsylvania



# FEAR NOT A FRIEND :

Challenge forces me to risk everything  
for the chance to expand my horizons.

I am afraid of him.

He will make me accountable for new  
opportunities;

Opportunities of success . . .  
or failure.

If I accept challenge, I might grow.

I might gain knowledge and  
understanding.

It is so much easier to hide

from all the hard work,

But despite all my fears,

Challenge stands with his hand out to me.

All I have to do is reach out and take it.

Challenge will help me and push me  
forward,

giving me a chance for success.

Challenge is my friend.

Summer Hayes, 16  
Odessa, Texas

# THE LOST

Where is the light when darkness prevails?

Where is happiness when sadness unveils?

Where is love when hate seems inescapable?

Where is the answer when it seems  
unexplainable?

Where is a smile when none is to be seen?

Where are the friends when life seems  
so mean?

Where is right when I'm told I do wrong?

Where is change when it seems far  
too long?

Where will a renewal of sadness come  
from, and who will cure it?

Where will a renewal of happiness come  
from, and who will bring it?

Joshua Leon Weinstein, 15  
Ellicott City, Maryland



# Baseball

• Bat, ball, pitch, miss.

• Bat, ball, pitch, tip.

• Bat, ball, pitch, hit.

• Run, throw, slide, safety.

• Bat, ball, pitch, miss.

• Bat, ball, pitch, hit.

• Jog, score, cheer, tie.

• Bat, ball, pitch, miss.

• Bat, ball, pitch, hit.

• Pop fly, catch, out.

• Bat, ball, pitch, hit.

• Jog, score, cheer, tie.

Andrew Summers Griffith, 15  
East Point, Georgia

# : MOVING ON

• One month is left before I leave.

• I can't decide whether the time has gone too slow  
or too fast.

• I'll be leaving my childhood behind forever,  
And I thought the time would always last.

• My dreams of when I would be big  
are finally here.

• And now I will be moving on—

• Leaving my friends who are so dear.

• During my eight years of school thus far

• I thought the time went oh, so slow,

But now with only four years left

• I hope that time will even more slowly go.

Holly Wells, 15  
Shelton, Washington

# : THE DIPLOMA

• The diploma I've tried for,

• The diploma I've strived for,

• is now in my hand,  
for I have made a stand.

Nikia Tamarra Ilesha Talford, 15  
Clover, South Carolina



## AN INCREDIBLE HIGH

(continued from page 25)

Terry said that he would make all the arrangements for us. Now all I had to do was sit and wait, and try not to get so nervous over the next six days that I'd throw up all over myself, or worse yet . . . chicken out.

Five of us got together that Sunday: Bobby, Rudy, Terry, myself, and C.J. C.J. was born in the United States, but his family is from India. He's got a name that's so long none of us can ever pronounce it correctly. That's why we just call him C.J. He was the last

## I WAS ON TOP OF THE WORLD.

one to join our group. We've known him for only about a year, but he seems to be an OK guy. C.J. is usually pretty quiet, but every now and then he gets into these moods where he can't stop joking around. He tells the sickest jokes and then laughs like a crazy person for the next 10 minutes. He's weird, but he's all right.

Terry went first, being that he was the most excited about it. I watched him carefully so that I'd know just how to do it when my turn came. Rudy was next, followed by C.J., Bobby, and me. I had asked to go last so that I could watch the others and see how it was done. I couldn't remember the last time that I'd felt more nervous or more excited. I guess that it was the risk involved in what we were doing that made me feel so worked up.

I kept thinking to myself, *I can't believe I'm actually doing this.* But there I was. At first it felt awkward. I knew that the others were watching me, and I didn't want to make a fool of myself. They had all tried to prepare me for what it would be like, but I

knew from listening to them that it was different for everybody. Terry, of course, thought that it was the greatest thing since the invention of the basketball hoop. C.J., Rudy, and Bobby weren't as crazy about it as Terry, but they did say that they loved the high they got from it.

It took a while before I got the hang of it. It felt funny, and I had to ease myself into it. I started to experience a range of emotions; I was a little paranoid and cautious at times, and then laughing and carefree at others. I could see why Terry was so addicted to it. I felt like I was on top of the world one minute, and soaring down it the next. My mind was racing, and I felt absolutely high. My skin tingled as all my senses came alive. My heart started pumping adrenaline like crazy. It was such a rush, and I didn't want the feeling to end. I never realized that it was possible to feel so good.

I stayed up for a pretty long time and came down slowly. My buddies were right there for me, watching to make sure that I was all right. Being that it was my first time, they wanted to make sure that I was having a good experience with it.

"So what do you think?" Terry asked after I came down.

I wasn't sure what to think. I was definitely wired, and I had a hard time putting my feelings into words.

"Oh, man!" I said, still feeling jumpy inside. "That was unbelievable. I still can't believe that I let you guys talk me into this. Come on, let's do it again."

Terry laughed at my excitement. "Told ya, man. I wouldn't lie to you. Isn't it awesome?"


Terry was right. I could definitely see how something like this could become a habit. Besides making me feel so good, it also gave me the opportunity to get approval from my friends. Having

their support meant a lot to me, and it was great to have experienced something so outrageous with them. It made me feel like we had a stronger bond between us than we'd ever had before. There was something special that we had shared that no one could ever take away from us.

The only negative thing about it was the money. It was an expensive way to spend our time, so I knew that we wouldn't be able to do it as often as I would have liked. Terry said that he had some other ideas up his sleeve that would show us just as great a time and wouldn't cost so much. We were all eager to hear what he had in mind, but C.J. saw that it was getting late.

"Come on, guys," he said. "We'd better get going."

None of us wanted to leave, but C.J. was right. It was starting to get late, and we needed to go. Terry promised that he would tell us all about his ideas on the ride home. We each got busy gathering our bags.

I packed up my rented skis and poles, turned to give one last look at the slopes, and thought to myself, *This is one experience I'll never forget. What an incredible high!* 

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Fooled you, right? Just goes to show that some of the same things that people hope to get from drug use are actually there to be had with real-life fun and adventure. The story also hints at something about human behavior that we need to be wary of. It's not necessary to chase a "high" all the time. If we don't relate to real fun in the right way, we might take the risk-taking too far—either an overdose or a collision with a tree while skiing can kill you. Don't live for the thrill of risk-taking. But be very aware that life itself is the ultimate thrill.



# ASK GARY

## Got Stoned

I'm worried. After ignoring my first instincts, I gave in and got stoned with my friends. Not only that, but I let my guard down and had sex for the first time. Now I think I'm pregnant. What should I do? *Sonia.*

Tens of thousands of teens every year make poor choices to use drugs, often going against their best judgments. Mood- and mind-altering substances do just that—they alter or change your way of thinking. Morals and values tend to go out the window, leaving you vulnerable to unsafe situations. As far as the possibility of your being pregnant goes, honesty is always the best policy. If you're uncomfortable sharing it with your parents, tell a trusted school counselor, pastor, or your family doctor. And stick with your first instincts next time. They're usually your best bet against future problems.

## Smashed and Stupid

One of my classmates in junior high committed suicide after staying out all night partying with a group of guys he hung out with. But even this wasn't enough to scare most of them. They continue to get smashed every weekend. How can they be so stupid? *Patricia*

It's called denial. The old "it can't happen to me" syndrome. These guys aren't willing to face the truth that what they did together brought about a senseless yet preventable death. For their sake I hope they take the time to be open-minded enough to consider the risks they are facing. The likelihood of suicide increases greatly under the influence of alcohol and other drugs. Life is too beautiful and satisfying to give up for the sake of getting high.

## Mom Buys Booze


Some of the kids where I live get all the booze they want from one of the boys' mother. She buys it for them. This makes me so mad. Is there anything I can do to stop her without being branded a snitch?

*John*

What a courageous stand to take! This world needs more concerned young people like you, willing to make a difference in keeping alcohol and kids apart. Either inform your parents about this irresponsible grown-up or contact the local law-enforcement department in your city. Let them know you wish to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals. You literally may be saving these boys' lives and teaching the mother a valuable lesson.

## Not Into Drugs

After I asked a girl out on a date, she surprised me by saying we could get stoned together after the show. I'm not into drugs and not sure what to do. I really like her a lot, too. *Markham*

Sounds like the girl of your dreams is more interested in getting high than having a romantic time. Some young people find it easier to communicate in uncomfortable situations by using drugs to lower inhibitions. Especially if they are shy. If this is the case, you may never get to know the "real" her. There are many girls out there who would feel honored to be asked out on a date—and not feel the need to use illicit substances to have a good time. If you still decide to treat this girl to a show, ask her to refrain from being high in your presence. She just might experience life the way it's meant to be—drug-free. 



**G**o ahead, ask Gary his advice on some of those big, serious, touchy questions. This guy enjoys the rough-and-tumble of helping teens with some serious problems. Gary Somdahl is a dad who puts his skills as a licensed youth chemical dependency counselor to the real-world test all the time. His latest book is *Drugs and Kids*.

Send your questions to:

**ASK GARY,**

*Listen magazine,*

55 West Oak Ridge Drive,  
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740.



# PICK ON SOMEBODY YOUR OWN SIZE!

WHAT SORT OF  
BUSINESS  
WOULD BE  
PREPARED TO  
DESTROY KIDS  
FOR A BUCK?

• **H**ey, wise up, you guys. People are starting to figure out your little scam, and it's not nice.

• Oh, sure, I know that tobacco producers have gotten away with targeting kids for a long time. They won't admit it publicly, but Joe Camel and all that sort of stuff are directly targeted at kids. Maybe that's why the FDA and a number of government experts have decided to call their bluff.

• But your latest makes the Joe Camel stuff look positively infantile.

• Just the other day I saw some cute little bottles with names like Lemon Drop, Butterball, and Oatmeal Cookie. They looked like dozens of other sugar and pop-type drinks aimed at the kiddie market. Difference is, these are heavily laced with alcohol—as high as 15 or 20 percent.

• I took the time to look over one of the bottles, and it's almost impossible to read that they contain any alcohol, let alone make a clear determination of the actual contents.

• So at best, this is a deceptively packaged product; and at worst, one of the most cynical attempts

ever to suck in young people who may not even be making a choice to drink alcohol. And everybody needs to have the choice.

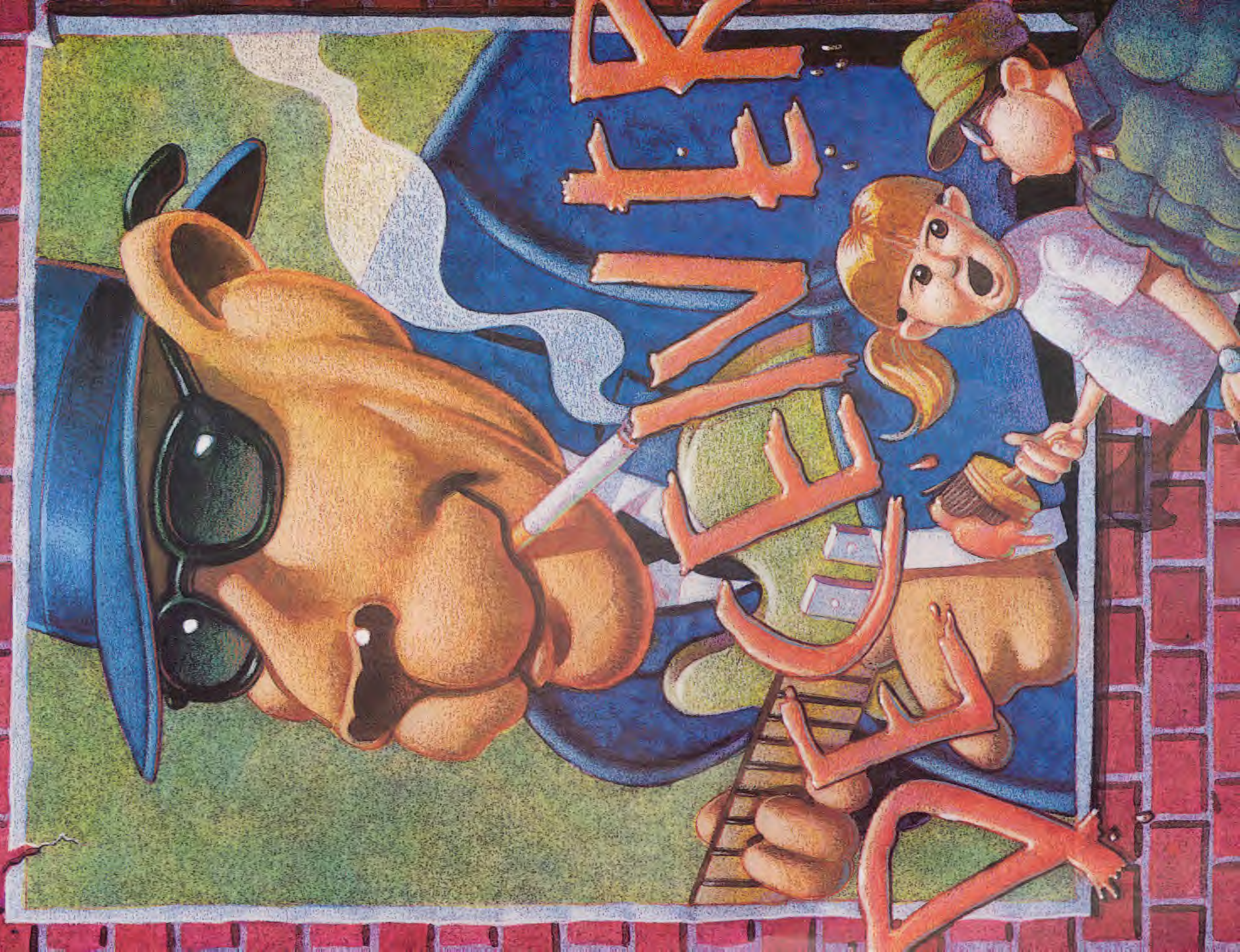
There was a lot of talk during the months before the presidential election about the deplorable statistics for teen drug use. Way up, we were told. But anybody who is anybody in the drug-education business knows that alcohol is a drug in the truest sense and, as far as teens are concerned, every bit as illegal as heroin, cocaine, and marijuana.

I say that it is time somebody stuck up for the kids. I say that it's time we stopped blaming teens and started looking at a culture and business interest that is cynically prepared to sacrifice young people for economic advantage.

So often alcohol and tobacco producers have told us that their advertising is, first of all, aimed at users and only encouraging one sort of brand preference over another; and second, that it is aimed at mature, able-to-make-up-their-own-minds adults. Well, 'tain't so, obviously.

Maybe you have gone a little bit too far this time, guys. I'm sure that parents, educators, government regulators, and the general public are going to figure this one out pretty quickly. Maybe we had better thank you for making your motives so abundantly clear. What sort of business would be prepared to deceive and destroy kids for a buck? ▀









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PHOTOS: (TOP); ED GUTHERO, (RIGHT); C/O HOLLEY & HARMAN / ASYLUM RECORDS

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■ GENERATION NEXT

Somebody cares.

■ DEALING WITH REJECTION

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