

Monday's Commentary

New high is found in an old-fashioned gas

Why is whipping cream paraphernalia being sold in an adult bookstore in Oakland County and in a head shop in Macomb County?

One might guess that the porno freaks are using the whipping cream in a kinky, sexual pursuit and that the druggies are staving off a case of the munchies caused by consumption of a great deal of Columbian marijuana. Wrong on both accounts.

The whipping cream that squirts out of canisters found in soda fountains and fine restaurants is propelled by nitrous oxide, commonly known as laughing gas.

Nitrous oxide is also used as a non-anesthetic by dentists and as a inflammable welding agent in construction work. But the patrons of the aforementioned businesses are buying little cartridges, known by the brand name "Whippets," to get high.

These N2O gas cartridges, which resemble CO2 cartridges used in pellet guns, aren't dropped into a whipping cream canister by nitrous oxide abusers.

At the bookstore or head shop they also buy a cylindrical metal device that screws apart in the middle. This device looks something like a silencer hit men use.

They drop the cartridge into one end of the open releaser and screw both ends together, causing the nipple of the cartridge to be punctured by a pin at the bottom end of the silencer. This sends 8.5 grams of laughing gas streaming into a balloon attached to the rear of the releaser.

Inhaling a blast of gas from the balloon causes audio distortion and visual hallucinations of a 10- to 30-second duration.

According to a doctor in residency at the University of Michigan dental school, nitrous oxide is fatal only if consumed in large doses without oxygen. This can cause a person's muscles to stiffen up, eyes to dilate, and kill them by asphyxiation.

Suicides have been performed with nitrous oxide, said the doctor, by inhaling gas directly from a mask connected to a large tank or by breathing the

The Flip Side

by craig piechura



fumes under a blanket or another closed-in area.

According to Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary, the colorless, non-flammable gas has little or no effect on body temperature or blood pressure, and has no adverse effects on the circulatory, respiratory, liver or kidney systems and mucous membranes.

"Compared with cocaine, horse (heroin) and all the other stuff on the street, I'd say nitrous oxide is relatively innocuous, but I don't want to pro-

mot it," said the U-M doctor.

The drug affects the central nervous system, the doctor explained, by reducing the conduction of impulses to the cortex of the brain through peripheral nerves. The gas is rapidly absorbed in nerve tissue and rapidly released again, unlike powerful gasses such as ether.

A salesman at the A.J. Marshall restaurant supply house in Detroit said sale of nitrous oxide has been restricted to businesses only recently and

refused to sell the gas to this reporter. "I can't do it. The young kids are popping the tops of the Whippets to get high," said a salesman last Thursday.

Mike Sendeck, director of marketing for the Walter Kidde & Co. of Belleville, N.J., was surprised to hear the product was being sold in a Macomb County head shop. The Kidde Co. manufactures Whippets, one of two gas cartridges abused in this area. The other company making gas-cartridges is I.S.I. of Austria.

"We're aware of the fact that some

these cartridges are being misused," Sendeck said. "It has come to our attention some time ago. We've withdrawn our product from the consumer marketplace."

Sendeck said this action has made homeowners with whipping cream canisters upset about the fact that "they can't get the product at Macy's."

He said the company watches for irregularities in orders for gas canisters to detect possible evidence of abuse, but noticed no upsurge in Detroit.

"We can tell what normal usage rates are for an area and if we see an abnormality, we run those individual cases down."

But now that consumers can no longer buy the product in stores, sales of Whippets has decreased sharply, Sendeck said. And the company has no control over "secondary distribution."

For the past few months thousands of whipping cream cartridges have been sold at the head shop and bookstore. And, funny thing is, not one quart of whipping cream has gone out the door.



"Around the edge"

by Jackie Klein

Carpools could be risky

Do you remember the good old days when we had plenty of gas but only one family car? I recall when car pools meant two or three mothers getting together and saying, "You take the kids to nursery school on Tuesday. If I get the station wagon, I'll take or pick them up Wednesday."

Now many of us have two cars, but in this modern age of technology and progress we may have an acute energy shortage. A few years ago when we were faced with a gas and oil crunch, a Southfield corporation devised a \$100,000 computerized car pooling system for employees and executives.

"There were to be no more simple phone calls like, 'Can you drive to work today? My dog threw up all over my car.' Those in the company who wanted to participate in the computerized "Operation Energy" were asked to complete an official questionnaire.

Corporation personnel were to indicate on the form where they live and work, driving time to their jobs and how far they'd be willing to travel, to pick up riders.

WHEN I learned of the system, I predicted it was doomed to fail because of a number of flaws. As far as I know, it was right. But in any case, other companies considering pooling drivers by computer, here are some potential pitfalls.

Take a corporation which employs 300 persons. Two clerical workers get in the car. They've been matched by data programming. "Hello number 4768," one says to the other. "I'm number 4769."

"We've never met, but I've admired that suit you've been wearing for the past eight years. You never know when it will come back in style." That's zinger number one to poor 4768.

Top management hops into an employee's 1964 two-door Ford with the fender dragging and a muffler coughing as though it had an advanced case of bronchial pneumonia.

"There must be a foul-up in the computer," top management grumbles, wondering why he left his 1979 Lincoln at home. "You must work for a pretty chintzy boss."

"YES SIR," the driver yells over the roar of the muffler. "I've been working for you for 10 years but we've never really been introduced. It seems to me the questionnaire should ask the

weight of all car pool passengers. Can't you see six guys who tip the scale at 250 pounds each, trying to cram into a little Gremlin?"

Either two fatsoes, at least, have to go on a crash diet or draw lots to see who stays home. "I won't be able to come to work today," the loser may tell his boss on the phone. "I'll see you in three months when I'm down to 195."

How about the computer matching members of the same political party? A staunch Democrat might climb into the car grumbling, "This whole damn energy crisis was contrived by Tricky Dick to divert attention from Watergate. And it was perpetuated by that ding-a-ling Jerry Ford."

"OH, YEAH," challenges the loyal Republican. "Jimmy Carter started this whole energy mess to divert attention from the fact that all his brains are in his teeth. And you joined this car pool to divert attention from the fact that you're too darn cheap to buy gas even if you could get all you wanted."

Can't you hear a mother five years from now telling her kids she and their daddy met in a car pool on the way to work?

"It was so romantic in the winter darkness at 7 a.m.," Mom recalls with stars in her eyes. "Maybe if your dad and I had seen each other when it got light at 8:45, you wouldn't be here today."

Yes, I see many problems with a computerized car pool. What about the woman driver with three guys in the back seat directing traffic and pressing their feet on the handbrakes?

"What if 'Typhoid Mary' starts coughing in the car, sprays her germs all over everyone and causes an instant epidemic. 'Smookey the Bear' in the back seat makes his fellow passengers douse their cigars and cigarettes or sit in the trunk.

WHAT IF a cute secretary is the last one in the car with a guy who makes a pass and threatens, "Shape up of ship out," when she's 10 miles away from home?

What if the computer blows it and the driver goes to Paw Paw in a blizzard to pick up a passenger who's sick in bed with the flu and can't go to work?

I could go on, but I've got to call Winifred to see if she's taking our grandchildren to nursery school or picking them up. Maybe I'll send her a questionnaire.



Melange

by Mary Gniewek

Where is beauty in highway?

You think you know a city, then you begin to realize you know it only by its freeway system. Detroit is like that. Everyone knows how to get downtown, or how to get from the east to west side and the best north-south routes.

But this is the fifth largest metropolitan area in the country. And we never see how or where most of its 5 million inhabitants live. Why? Because of the super-efficient highway system in which everything is inter-connected. It's quick, but the concrete scenery is lousy. Once in awhile, we get a glance of life beyond the walls, like at the I-75 bridge over the Rouge River. Ever wonder what people traveling north from Ohio must think, if being their first view of metropolitan Detroit? It's a little like my first impression of metropolitan Chicago via Gary, Ind.

Imagine life with the constant backdrop of the Ford-Rouge plant. Husbands and wives going off to work, kids going to school while the smokestacks belch furiously. How often must they wash their cars? Can they hang their laundry out to dry in the backyard?

The almighty factory. It will never go away. No more than the steady drone of jet planes will ever stop being heard by the folks who live along the landing pattern route for Metropolitan Airport.

I-94 at the Ford Rd.-Addison exit offers another glimpse of real life. Before a motorist can gain access to

fast-paced Ford Rd., there's a small strip of Addison, then McGraw to be maneuvered.

THAT LITTLE STRIP isn't much, but it's ethnic Detroit. Homes are so close together that you could walk out of one window and into the next house in one step. The wooden front porches hold big clay pots full of geraniums. And people sit on their front porches.

Life goes on beyond the super-highways. What would short distance travel be like without expressways? I wondered about that recently while cruising along the Jeffries Freeway on my regular round-trip work route.

Those little glimpses of life beyond the concrete walls would surely widen. Obscure avenues, now mere signs on freeways or lines on maps, would suddenly take on new forms.

I know that life without freeways wouldn't be practical or feasible in Detroit. Not now, anyway. But it's a computer fantasy and a good one when you're stuck in traffic and it's 90 degrees and your car is threatening to overheat.

With gas prices skyrocketing, fuel supplies scarce, and highway death tolls a reality — wouldn't it be great to sweat off those super-highways?

Now if I could just figure out another use for those miles and miles and miles of abandoned concrete.

Shirlee's sallies

by Shirlee Iden



Bleed a little — it might help

No one's asking you to be a bleeding heart. But there are lots of someone's out there who would be in your debt if you became a blood donor.

It's painless, simple and gratifying. While the shortage of gasoline and other energy grabs all the headlines, few people are aware that there is an acute blood shortage in our area.

The Red Cross in this area gathers blood for more than 80 hospitals located in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, St. Clair and Washtenaw Counties.

Shortages are not unusual during holiday times and in the summer months. While researchers can probe the possibilities of perfecting gasoline made from corn cobs, alcohol, potatoes or any number of bizarre substances, there's no substitute for blood.

Sylvia Brown, executive director of the Children's Leukemia Foundation, said that while emergency blood supplies run low in the summer, at the same time, blood is in great demand. People are more active in warm weather and more apt to be involved in accidents.

MRS. BROWN IS also concerned about victims of blood disease who always need blood and depend on the forthcoming volunteers who supply it.

When Mrs. Brown's young daughter died of leukemia more than 30 years ago, little could be done for her. Today, young leukemia victims often experience up to five years of remission.

"Advancements in research have unveiled medications which have been quite effective in combating blood diseases," she said. "Also, development like leukopheresis have helped patients battle infections, often the killer in these cases."

The leukopheresis process isolates infection fighting cells from normal blood cells for use in patients to fight infections.

It's everyone's dream to see even more advancement in the fight against blood diseases that strike children and adults. For those afflicted, donated blood is one of the lifelines they cling to until more progress is made.

Anyone who's ever undergone surgery or waited while a loved one was under the surgeon's knife, or sweated out an accident scene in an emergency room knows how vital emergency blood supplies can be.

During World War II, regular donations of blood became a way of life for many people. They learned how simple it could be and what a feeling of human accomplishment they received.

BY AND LARGE most people can give blood if they are in good health. The Red Cross requires that donors be at least 17 years of age (with parental consent) and they will take blood from donors up to 65 years of age.

Trained personnel screen all potential donors during the registration process. Donations are on a volunteer basis and are usually by appointment only.

On Saturday and Sunday, a Red Cross Bloodmobile will be available from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Tel-Twelve Mall.

Children's Leukemia Foundation will sponsor its seventh-annual Blood Drive from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, July 8. A Bloodmobile will be at the foundation's headquarters, 19022 10 Mile in Southfield. Call 353-822 for an appointment.

Their one-day drive kicks off Leukemia Week in Michigan, an educational effort by CLF to let the public know about efforts to combat serious blood disease.

We may not be able to convince the OPEC nations to give us energy relief, but it's up to each one of us to relieve the acute shortage in emergency blood supplies.

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Steve Barnaby
Editor
2352 Farmington Rd.
Farmington, MI 48024
(313) 477-5450

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