

Down By The Berry Patch

"Poof"

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"Do you know what this is?" When John brought it home and showed it to me I didn't have a clue. He said they find it growing in the flower beds at Potter Park all the time. They just pull it out and throw it away but he thought maybe I'd like to see what it looks like.

Mother was as fascinated as I was. She'd never seen marijuana either. We thought my kids probably knew more about such things than both of us put together. We thought right. One of our children came in and thought we were pretty naive. John came in and the discussion turned to what it would feel like if somebody got high. We could only speculate because we really didn't know people who actually smoked pot. We decided we were from the wrong generations to be cool about such things.



I confessed the fact that I tried smoking a cigarette one time in high school. Kenny Irion got hold a cigarette from his sister's purse and a group of us met after dark on New Years Eve in the basement of the shell that was left after the wall caved in on the American Legion Hall. We huddled in a circle. Kenny lit it and took a drag. Seven of us took a puff as it was passed around the circle. Then it came around again. I was so scared I'd get caught that I didn't really think about what it was like. What if someone found out I smoked. What if Mother found out?

Mother retold an old family favorite about when her sister Mary attended Michigan State College and started Morrill Hall on fire when she was teaching her roommate how to smoke. Way back then, it was forbidden for women on campus to smoke; not that a rule ever stopped Aunt Mary from doing what she wanted. The housemother was coming down the hall so they hid their lighted cigarettes under the mattress. Mary got called on the carpet but she didn't get expelled from school. The Dean was very caring. He said he was very concerned about her asthma and told her Michigan State College was not a good place for her. Next semester he was certain she would enroll in a college where the climate would be better for her health.

Just when I was waiting for her to end with the part about Mary not caring anyway because she only enrolled at MSC because she was only 17 and couldn't get into nurses training until she turned 18, I heard Mother say, "I think we should try it.....".

Instant shock! Mother!

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Photo Caption: [Torben Hansen](#)

Then reason took over. Only one kid was at home. No one else would ever know.

"I don't even know how to go about it. What do you do with it?" I asked.

Our child was quick to say she'd go to the party store and get some cigarette papers. No one objected and she was out the door. Not much was said while she was gone. No one suggested backing out of such a forbidden adventure. She returned with papers, tossed them on the table and said she had to go upstairs and get a roach. It was clear that one of us knew something. She said her friends told her about it.

John carefully crumbled the three little leaves and rolled the paper around them. It looked pretty flat and empty when our daughter clipped something on the end. There was no conversation. No generation was about to back down.

The teenager was leading. She demonstrated how to hold it and inhaled. We watched her and waited for her behavior to change. Not detecting any, the father was willing to take a turn. It went to the grandmother next and finally to the mother. We sat and waited for something to happen.

Realizing that maybe it took more than one puff, the joint was passed around the table a second time. Deeper sucks. Then we waited. Maybe it needed time. Maybe we did something wrong. Maybe something would happen later.

"Oh my God! Patty's coming up the driveway!" Our daughter ran away with the clip and the rest of us waved our arms, frantically fanning the air so Patty would never suspect we were doing such a terrible thing. It wasn't clear what she would suspect but we didn't want leave any evidence of it. Patty walked in into the kitchen and immediately questioned us. "Can me and Becky and Scotty have a Popsicle?"

Some day, when we are ready to own up to our wickedness, this will make a great story!

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