

How to Be Cool in Class



The taped interview: The young lady — a child, really — is 19 years of age. She has the face of a pale full moon and blue eyes which enjoy being slightly amused. The hair is brown, shoulder length, and she snaps her head to shake it out of her eyes. She wears cut-down jeans, sandals, and a dollar ninety-eight cent blouse.

She is enrolled at The Seed, a big revival hall in Davie, Florida, where hundreds of young addicts publicly confess their wrongs to each other and, with the help of God and a former alcoholic named Art Barker, find salvation.

"I used everything from pot to heroin," she says softly, "and I was strung out on heroin for about three years. First of all, I should tell you that I've been using drugs five years.

Young "Innocent"

"It's hard to talk about money because I don't remember. I had no imagination at all. My parents were sure I was straight because I was so young. But, like I used to go to New York and cop a lot of stuff and I used to take it down to Florida and, like, sell it.

"See, with a kid like that, it's easy. My connections were on the plane with me. I never used to carry a whole lot. Maybe a pound of heroin stuck in my leather boots and my bra, you know?

"I made a connection in Detroit and a pot connection in Kansas City. It was funny, mister. I was flying back and forth between those places and I didn't know where they were. I bought a kilo of pot in Kansas for \$30 and sold it in Florida schoolyards for \$300.

"From Detroit, I brought in mescaline and the kids went wild. I was making, like, when I was fourteen, I was making between \$500 and \$1,000 a day. This was a lot more than I needed to keep my habit going.

"See, you have to understand that a boy who is a druggie — say he has a \$50 a day habit — he has to B & E a hundred and fifty a day. Excuse me? Oh, that means breaking and entering. He has to steal \$150 a day to fence the stuff for \$50. Girls — well, they have to go for men. They give themselves to the guys and they get enough dough to keep them from being strung out and climbing the walls. It's the only way.

"I never sold a bag of junk. They go for 10 bucks, but they're cut to three or four percent. Me, I'd sell a hundred dollar piece to a pusher. In my school in Florida, bags were 10 bucks, a spoon was 20.

"A girl friend of mine in New York worked for the fuzz. She had a lieutenant on the narco squad. Everything he picked up in junk he gave to Maureen and she sold it and split with the cop. It was an easy pickup. No problem.

"I'd tell my people like, look, I'm going up to New York and they'd front me some money. Excuse me? Oh, I started with my friends in school. Like parents don't understand that all the kids want to be cool. Unless you're cool, you have no friends. What? Yeah, acceptance. If you're not accepted by your parents, that's bad. If you're not accepted at school,

"So, if everybody is doing it, you do it even if it makes you

sick. My mother sent me to a ritzy school in New York. It took, lemme see, three months to find two other chicks who were strung out. The three of us hooked 294 chicks in that school. No problem. They won't play, they don't belong.

"I used to go, like uptown, and buy a hundred dollar piece in the back of a car. I'd put it in my bag. I had a hundred dollar piece made up, except it was baking soda. I'd tell this John I must have forgot my money and I'd give him the baking soda and keep the heroin.

"Later, I'd see him and pretend to get mad and tell him somebody was beating his dope really bad and stuff like that, and you better watch it. The bad part is that you begin to hang out with the lowest bunch you can find.

Anything Goes

"Soon, you become a garbage head; you take anything — downers, speed, LSD, mescaline — like, you know.

"What's that? Oh, 17 months now. Clean, clean. I work here at The Seed and when the new kids come in, they don't want to listen. Then they start talking, and, like, you know, they're conning you all the way. It takes patience to tell an acidhead that he feels lousy because he thinks he feels good."

She stood. There was a shyness in the moon face and the childish expression. The difference between this girl and the older addicts is that youth has time to make a 180-degree turn and drive in the opposite direction. The older bodies are sick heaps.

