The dark side of the summer of love

how meth and madness destroyed the hippie dream

by frank owen

Forty years ago this summer a sizable segment of the country's youth was gripped by a peculiar frenzy. Something was stealing away America's teenagers. In what seemed like nothing less than a replay of the Children's Crusade of the Middle Ages, normal kids from middle-class homes suddenly took to the road, often carrying little more than the clothes on their back. They came from far and wide, refugees from relative affluence, by car and by thumb, from the big cities and the Great Plains. They were headed to a New Jerusalem: a Gothic Victorian village on a hill in San Francisco called Haight-Ashbury.

ILLUSTRATION BY YUKO SHIMIZU

Left: Dr. David E. Smith sitting in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic, which he opened on June 7, 1967. It became a kind of barometer for what was happening out in the streets. Above: Allen Ginsberg (far left) and others at the Human Be-In.

Who needed money or possessions? Everything was free in the Haight. The Grateful Dead played for free in the park. The Diggers gave out free food. Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters supplied free acid to anyone who wanted it. People lived free in communes. Free love was common currency. It was one big countercultural utopia.

What could possibly go wrong?

Hippies young and old idealize what happened in Haight-Ashbury during the summer of 1967 as a dawning of a new age. In many ways it was a noble experiment. But behind the scenes a more sinister reality was already emerging as a new subculture took root in the shadow of the flower children, one devoted not to spiritual exploration but to madness and mayhem. A group whose signature drug wasn't LSD but a substance we know today as the favorite high of hillbillies, right-wing preachers and suburban moms: crystal methamphetamine. The tale of how this group and this drug came to tear Haight-Ashbury apart is one of the little-known stories of that summer. But it is as much a part of its legacy as long hair and tie-dyes.

The summer of 1967 began in effect on a January day. A free concert in Golden Gate Park called the Human Be-In drew some 20,000 people. Among the bells, beads and face paint that afternoon was a clean-cut man in a jacket and tie who stood out because of his ordinariness. He could have been an undercover narc or a reporter, but the way he wore his earnestness like an emblem marked him more as an academic type. He was Dr. David E. Smith, a 28-year-old toxicologist who worked up the hill from the Haight in a lab in the pharmacology department at the University of California, San Francisco. By day he injected mice with LSD and methamphetamine and examined their behavior, but even that paled in comparison to what the fresh-faced doctor saw at the Be-In. From the stage, the poet Allen Ginsberg led the crowd in Buddhist chants, and acid guru Timothy Leary urged the audience to "turn on, tune in, drop out." The best of San Francisco's acid-rock scene performed: the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and Big Brother & the Holding Company. The real stars of the Be-In, Smith soon realized, were the hippies. As he recalls the event today, he was seeing something he could not believe. "Everybody was tripped out on acid," he says. "I remember one guy in the back was having a death-rebirth experience. I was like, 'Wow.'" Forget rodents. Here was a chance to study up close the effects on humans of the same drugs he was injecting into animals.

"In the beginning," Smith says, "my interest in the Haight was as a natural drug laboratory, a giant mouse cage."

After the Be-In not a single fight was reported. Even the Hell's Angels behaved. The Parks Department complimented the hippies for leaving the park in a pristine state. On that golden afternoon some attendees believed they were witnessing the birth of a religion. The Be-In catapulted San Francisco's flower children to national prominence. All the publicity lured more young people to sample this new lifestyle for themselves.

By February 1967 it was clear that the impending summer—when the high schools and universities let out—would welcome a huge wave of hippies-in-training. A group of politicos, artists and shop owners around Haight-Ashbury formed a coalition to welcome the teenage tenderfoots and act as a liaison with the community. They called themselves the Council for the Summer of Love.

It now had a name.

The council suggested that visitors be allowed to sleep in Golden Gate Park, an idea shot down by San Francisco police chief Tom Cahill. "Law and order will prevail," he said. "There will be no sleeping in the park. There are no sanitation facilities, and if we let them camp, there would be a tremendous health problem." He warned, "Nobody should let their children take part in this hippie thing." For the police it was too late. The hippies were already arriving.

As the Summer of Love approached, Smith, who held a second job at the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Screening Unit at San Francisco General Hospital, noticed more and more panicked young people being admitted with adverse reactions to psychedelic drugs. Prior to 1967 he dealt mainly with older alcoholics, heroin users from the ghetto and jittery methamphetamine addicts ("speed freaks") from the Tenderloin. But the Haight hippies didn't fit the drug-user stereotype. They were younger, better educated and almost exclusively white. They were also scared of emergency rooms, where they risked being forced into straitjackets until the drugs wore off. Such treatment, Smith believed, exacerbated the negative effects of LSD. He had the idea to open a special clinic to deal with this new drug-taking community, one that offered nonjudgmental advice and was free of charge.

Smith approached City Hall and warned officials about what he saw as a public-health crisis in the making. He was quickly rebuffed. If anything went wrong, acid casualties would have to use the existing facilities. "They said that

"it's like a speed-freak heaven," said dr. zoom,

Above: A bulletin board of missing persons at the Park Police Station in the Haight-Ashbury district, June 1967. The sign at the top reads missing juveniles only. Throughout the summer, teenage runaways continued to arrive, many with no money or even shoes.

if you set up special clinics, it would just bring more of them," says Smith.

Outwardly, Smith was an odd advocate for hippie health. The ambitious son of a working-class family, whose grandparents had fled the Oklahoma dust bowl for a better life in California, he appeared more Doogie Howser than Jerry Garcia. "I was the least likely person to end up doing what I did," says Smith. "My career plan was to do academic medicine, do research, be respected in the university, in the ivory tower. But I was learning more walking the streets of Haight-Ashbury in the evening than I was in my job."

In May 1967 Smith had what he describes as a spiritual awakening: his first acid trip. In October 1966 LSD had become illegal in California, but Smith had access to it because of his work. He had never dosed himself before. Looking back, the famed and still controversial 68-year-old drug-treatment expert admits he was naive. "I romanticized psychedelics," he says. "I had this view that there was a hard-drug subculture and there was a separate psychedelic culture. I'd convinced myself that psychedelics were the good drugs. At the time, I didn't realize that the two worlds would soon morph into each other."

The acid trip energized Smith to take action. He rented a 14-room former dentist's office on the second floor at 558 Clayton Street, just off Haight Street, for $150 a month. The new facility was to be called the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic, financed by private donations and staffed by volunteers from the medical community and local citizenry. It opened just as the summer arrived—on June 7, 1967. Its slogan, which was painted on a sign outside, summed up its mission: LOVE NEEDS CARE.

Within 24 hours, 250 patients came through the doors of the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic. The shabby Italianate row house with overhanging eaves and wide bay windows had a line stretching around the corner. Patients entered through the door and climbed the dark stairwell. At the top a sign greeted them: NO DEALING. NO HOLDING. NO USING DOPE. NO PETS. ANY OF THESE CAN CLOSE THE CLINIC. WE LOVE YOU. Stoned teenage boys nodded out in the hallway. Young girls passed out flowers in the waiting room, the walls of which were decorated with psychedelic posters. The smell of marijuana and body odor wafted through the cramped warren of cubicles and side rooms. Among the cases treated that day were two bikers with second-degree burns, 12 patients with infectious hepatitis and 50 hippies who complained of bronchitis, a workload that would expand the next day to include cases of ringworm, asthma attacks, malnutrition, food poisoning and venereal diseases.

As Smith had anticipated, one of the major tasks in the beginning was calming down LSD trippers. At midnight a young woman clad only in a pink bedsheet turned up at the reception desk. She had been up for 10 days tripping. Two days later another hippie tried to throw herself through the walls of the clinic while freaking out on acid. In the first few days the clinic was seeing as many as a dozen adverse reactions to LSD every hour. In July alone 15 children, ranging in age from six months to five years, were treated for bad trips at the free clinic. They had been given the drug by their parents.

Only a small percentage of trips turned negative, but a bad trip was difficult to

"like a dope-fiend bowery."

the hit parade

was 1967 pop music's greatest year?

JANUARY 4: ***The Doors,*** **the eponymous debut album from a new L.A. band, lands in music stores. "The End" is a masterpiece. "Light My Fire" begins its 40-year run of radio overkill.**

FEBRUARY: **Jefferson Airplane's** ***Surrealistic Pillow*** **opens America's eyes to the acid-drenched San Francisco scene.**

FEBRUARY 6: ***Between the Buttons*** **includes the Rolling Stones' hit "Let's Spend the Night Together." The band causes a stir when it performs the tune on** ***The Ed Sullivan Show.***

FEBRUARY 20: **The Byrds'** ***Younger Than Yesterday*** **features "So You Want to Be a Rock 'n' Roll Star" and "My Back Pages."**

MARCH: **Donovan's** ***Mellow Yellow*** **is mellow indeed.**

MARCH 10: **With** ***I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You,*** **Aretha Franklin wins herself plenty of** ***r-e-s-p-e-c-t.***

MARCH 12: **Produced by Andy Warhol,** ***The Velvet Underground & Nico*** **establishes the art-rock genre.**

MARCH 17: **Jerry Garcia and the gang release their first studio record,** ***The Grateful Dead.***

MAY 12: **Jimi Hendrix arrives with** ***Are You Experienced?*** **The all-time greatest debut album?**

JUNE 2: ***Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*** **changes the music scene forever.**

JULY 3: **The Stones release** ***Flowers.***

AUGUST 5: **The London quartet Pink Floyd releases its first album,** ***The Piper at the Gates of Dawn.*** **Weird, man, weird.**

OCTOBER 2: **The Doors' follow-up,** ***Strange Days,*** **includes "Love Me Two Times" and "Moonlight Drive."**

NOVEMBER 27: **The Beatles'** ***Magical Mystery Tour*** **features the hit single "Penny Lane."**

DECEMBER: **Traffic releases** ***Mr. Fantasy.***

DECEMBER 8: **The Stones come again with** ***Their Satanic Majesties Request.***

DECEMBER 15: ***The Who Sell Out.***

DECEMBER 27: **Following his near-deadly motorcycle crash, Bob Dylan returns with** ***John Wesley Harding.*** **"All Along the Watchtower" hits number four on the charts.**

treat. A bad tripper experienced distilled fear, and it was timeless. It felt as if the experience was never going to end.

Smith set up a room called the calm center where volunteers talked down patients and dosed them with mild sedatives. Trippers were directed to stare into a candle while soothing words redirected their mind: "You're in a rowboat now. Just lift up the oars and let the boat take you downstream" was typical of the placid scenarios painted. One of the rumors sweeping the Haight blamed a rash of bad trips on a batch of low-quality acid that had hit the streets. Smith tested some of the "bad acid" in the laboratory and found it to be surprisingly pure. Bad acid wasn't causing the bum vibes; the problem was that the acid was so good.

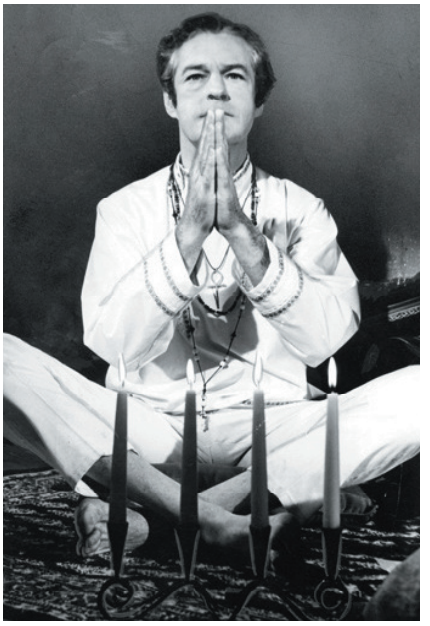
As the Summer of Love progressed, Smith realized that the LSD saturating the Haight was just one element in a vast pharmacopoeia. Improbably, his clinic had quickly become a barometer, a filter of sorts, for what was going on in the streets. He knew the Haight was headed for trouble. Typical of his patients was Janis Joplin, queen of the Haight. The singer was both an early benefactor to the clinic and a client. Smith initially treated her for complications from an abortion she'd undergone in Mexico, after which he became intimately involved with trying to detoxify her: "She would get toxic on speed, so she'd switch to heroin. She'd get toxic on heroin and then switch to alcohol. She'd get toxic on alcohol and switch back to speed. She had no real interest in stopping using drugs. There was only an interest in not dying from them, which is what eventually happened."

The Haight was becoming a giant behavioral sink of human guinea pigs living on top of one another and dosing themselves with a bewildering array of chemicals. Not just acid but PCP, MDA, ketamine, nitrous oxide, amyl nitrate, cocaine and heroin, as well as prescription drugs like Symmetrel and Sansert.

But one drug stands out in Smith's mind as the most destructive, a drug that then, as now, had a reputation as one of the most socially corrosive. As the summer progressed, the clinic was feeling more and more of its paranoid presence.

Dr. Zoom hustled down Haight Street, pushing his way through the hippie hordes. A face bursting with acne peered out sullenly from behind a curtain of hair. Pinned to the lapel of his frayed peacoat for everyone to see was a hypodermic needle—a badge of his profession as the Haight's self-described king of the speed freaks. Underneath the coat, strapped to his hip, he carried a .22 automatic. Damn hippies, they were everywhere.

He had lived in the Haight since 1965, but he had never seen it this crowded. Dr. Zoom disliked hippies even though he was happy to sell them drugs. A deep cynicism marked his worldview. Flower children were half-hip fools who didn't understand the dog-eat-dog reality of life on the streets. "All that peace-and-love crap," he liked to say. Screw the Summer of Love. The Haight was a mean place. You needed a gun just to survive.



From left: Sonny Barger (on bike), head of the Oakland chapter of the Hell's Angels, who enforced their own laws in San Francisco during the Summer of Love. Topless hippies stroll on campus at San Francisco State College. Timothy Leary, acid-head mystic, was a demigod in the Haight.

Born in San Bernardino, California, Dr. Zoom had grown up in Stockton, about 50 miles east of San Francisco. His introduction to the drug world came at the age of 13 when he swallowed a handful of prescription amphetamine pills from his mother's bathroom cabinet. He left home a year later, and by the time he was 16 he was a heroin junkie living on New York's lower east side. After a short stint in the Navy, he moved to San Francisco's North Beach district, where he caught the tail end of the beatnik boom and followed the cool cats who became the core of the hippie scene when they moved to Haight-Ashbury. Not a lot was happening in the neighborhood except for the drug action. Then it started to fill up with artists, musicians and students. At 23 he was the voice of experience. "I've done more speed research in the past 10 years than anyone," he liked to boast to younger scene-makers.

Crystal meth was the best drug Dr. Zoom ever tried. Instant self-esteem. The most meth he ever shot up at one time was an eighth of an ounce, some sort of record for the Haight, he bragged. His longest run was 18 days sitting in a room, easing spike after spike into his veins. Acid just messed with his head. On meth he didn't have to think about food or sleep or even sex. In fact, Dr. Zoom couldn't remember the last time he had a hard-on. To him chemical sex—the rush he felt when he shot the drug into his veins—was better than genital sex any day of the week.

Dr. Zoom reveled in his status as an outsider. He took a perverse pride in being a needle freak. He knew that even in the Haight, with its almost unlimited tolerance for all types of chemicals, crystal-meth users were regarded with intense suspicion. Even heroin junkies looked down their noses at speed freaks.

It wasn't easy being a world-class meth addict. Every day there were hassles. Customers and rival speed dealers trying to burn you. Local cops *(continued on page 122)*

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beating you down. But he liked the action. He liked the action so much he thought if it ever stopped, he would die. Selling drugs and taking drugs were the sum of his existence. His favorite book was the *Physicians' Desk Reference*. He dreamed of owning his own speed lab or inventing some new chemical compound that would make him rich.

The Haight was a crazy neighborhood, and these were crazy times. The place was turning into one big drug supermarket. Dr. Zoom couldn't help wondering how this was all going to end. "Terminal euphoria," he liked to call the new mood he detected creeping onto the street. "These kids out here think they're so cool, but they don't have a clue," he told anyone who would listen. "All those teenyboppers walking around, little 12-year-old kids out of their skulls, acting like they got more cool than anybody in the Haight. Well, I tell you, all they got is terminal euphoria. Hell, the whole place has got it."

As the summer moved along, more and more speed freaks wore syringes on their lapels, a sign that the mood in the Haight was about to change, and not for the better.

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Drugs weren't the only thing causing health problems. In this small, tightly knit neighborhood, with its emphasis on sharing and its contempt for the laws of hygiene, communicable illnesses spread rapidly. They all filtered through the clinic. In July, Smith treated more than 100 people with measles. He was also infected, as were two dozen of his helpers. Mononucleosis swept through, followed by strep throat and tonsillitis. Flu was another common illness, as were pneumonia and pleurisy. Scabies. Trench mouth. Athlete's foot. Hemorrhoids. Even tooth discoloration from hippies scrubbing their teeth with clumps of grass. One of the most acute problems was the liver disease hepatitis, transmitted by shared needles used by heroin junkies and speed freaks. Close to a thousand new cases of hepatitis were reported in San Francisco during 1967, most of them from in or around the Haight.

Diseases that had largely been eradicated or were in steep decline abruptly experienced a resurgence. "Tuberculosis was almost extinct," says Smith. "Then suddenly you started to see it come back in the Haight." Doctors at the clinic came across exotic strains of sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrheal prostatitis, a bacterial prostate infection that had previously been diagnosed among U.S. servicemen in Vietnam but before 1967 was unheard of among adolescents in America.

But in the end the clinic was a home for drug casualties. As the summer wore on, Smith began to come across substances he had never heard of—drugs like STP, a long-lasting hallucinogen touted as a legal alternative to LSD. The hippies called STP

Serenity, Tranquility and Peace. (The cops called it Too Stupid to Puke.) The clinic saw its first case of an STP overdose two days after it opened. A 19-year-old man who had taken the drug 48 hours earlier was panicking because he thought he was never going to come down. At first this seemed like an isolated case. However, at the end of June, at the Summer Solstice Festival in Golden Gate Park, 5,000 hits of STP were distributed gratis to the crowd. The liberal dosing came courtesy of Owsley Stanley, the legendary underground chemist who, it was said, "did for LSD what Henry Ford did for the motorcar." Timothy Leary called him "God's secret agent." Owsley test-marketed the products of his clandestine laboratories by giving out free samples in the Haight.

Scores of young people suffered bad trips. Thirty-two of them ended up at the clinic, some suffering major breakdowns and complaining that their brains "were on fire." "We had to sit with them for two or three days until they came down," says pharmacologist Darryl Inaba, an early volunteer at the clinic who was christened Dr. Dope by the hippies and would later go on to co-write the popular drug guide *Uppers, Downers, All Arounders*. "It was very scary." Eventually the identity of the chemical was revealed: 2,5-dimethoxy-4-methylamphetamine, one of the dozens of compounds synthesized by Dow chemist Alex Shulgin, chemicals that were initially intended to be used in psychotherapy but had found their way into underground cookbooks. As Shulgin—the man who rediscovered ecstasy and would go on to become the patron saint of the rave generation—later wrote in his drug bible *PIHKAL* (Phenethylamines I Have Known and Loved): "Three milligrams [of STP] will produce a good high. Ten milligrams will allow you to take your brain out of your head and examine it."

The initial doses being distributed in the Haight contained twice that amount, some 20 milligrams.

Halfway through the Summer of Love a growing division had split the Haight's leaders. Gurus like Timothy Leary touted psychedelics as the modern-day equivalent of the Holy Eucharist. Meanwhile doctors—Smith foremost among them—were left to clean up the mess. During the Summer of Love, Smith invited Leary to speak to fellow doctors at the University of California, San Francisco. After the lecture Leary and some of the doctors smoked pot and went down the hill to visit the Haight. Leary, who was riding a wave of popularity, was mobbed with devotees. Then a window opened in a second-floor apartment. Some people were suffering from bad trips, and their friends didn't want to take them to the emergency room. They begged Leary to come upstairs and help. Leary dutifully trudged up the steps, but when he entered the apartment he was appalled. "These people are not taking the drug in a proper religious context," he huffed. "You deal with it," he told Smith, who by now was as high as a kite on pot.

"Leary couldn't deal with the realities of the drug's downside," remembers Smith today. "He said, 'Turn on, tune in and drop out.' Well, some people turned on, tuned in and freaked out. When they freaked out, Leary wanted nothing to do with them."

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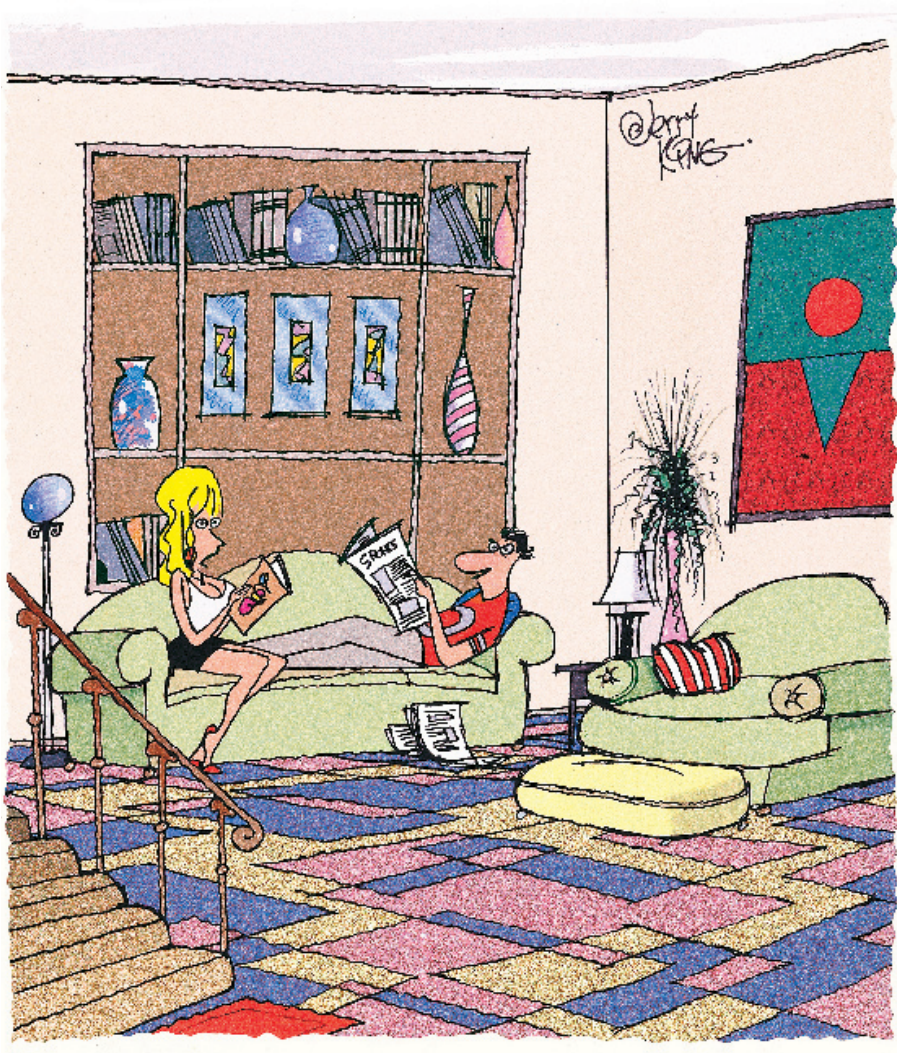
In August 1967 the unraveling picked up speed. The grisly murders of two local drug dealers in the space of one week stunned the Haight. First was a 25-year-old speed dealer named John Kent Carter, who was found stabbed to death in his apartment in the Haight, his right arm severed at the elbow. The guilty man was apprehended outside San Francisco, driving the victim's car. Next to him on the passenger seat was damning evidence: Carter's arm wrapped in a suede bag. The killer, apparently on methamphetamine when he committed the crime, calmly explained to the police why he had chopped off his victim's limb. "The hand is a man's history," he said. "I'm a Cancer. I'm not a hard person, normally." A few days later William Thomas, a pot dealer known as Superspade, was found shot and stabbed to death, stuffed into a sleeping bag and left to dangle from the top of a Marin County cliff. The rumor was that Superspade avoided prison time by ratting out rival dealers; his murder was said to be payback.

Violence was inevitable. That summer a number of different subcultures were crystallizing at the same time. What was labeled "hippie" in the media was actually a collection of competing groups united by only a common interest in sex, drugs and rock and roll. There were the genuine hippies, true believers in the holy trinity of peace, love and cosmic consciousness, but as the Summer of Love progressed they were increasingly outnumbered by the oddest collection of moochers, burnouts, fake mystics and sociopaths this side of an asylum for the criminally insane.

Among the local fixtures on the street that summer were the Hell's Angels,



"I wrote a letter to the Playboy Advisor about your sexual performance. However, they published it on the Party Jokes page."

whom the hippies looked up to as their protectors despite their reputation for violence and mayhem. The Angels frequently roared through the neighborhood on their polished choppers. Ken Kesey had introduced them to the scene during one of his famous Acid Test parties. "You break people's bones; I break people's heads," he reportedly told them. At one of these parties the Angels made contact with acid producer Owsley Stanley, who employed the group to distribute the various products of his underground laboratories.

The passing parade on Haight Street also included "plastic hippies" (harmless weekend adventurers), draft dodgers and what honky hipsters called street spades, nattily attired black men engaged in petty hustles. There was even a satanist contingent. In 1966 Anton LaVey founded the Church of Satan at his home on California Street, which attracted a steady stream of socialites and celebrities to campy black masses. Over at the Russian embassy on Fulton Street, Mick Jagger and underground filmmaker Kenneth Anger (*Lucifer Rising*) performed black-magic rituals in the wooden tower of the grand Gothic pile.

Teenage runaways arrived in waves all through the summer of 1967. They came with little or no money and expected the hippies to take care of them. "Some of them didn't even have shoes," recalls Smith. "I would get calls from desperate parents: 'My son left in a van from Des Moines and went up to the Haight.' And then I would talk to these kids. Some of them would say, 'My mom is an alcoholic' or 'My dad tried to rape me.' The big myth is that this problem was created in San Francisco. It wasn't. It was created in the heartland of America. I started to realize these kids had problems before they ever came to the Haight."

More troubling still were the crazies, people who suffered from mental illness and used drugs to medicate their condition or mask their madness. "There was this attitude on the street that the crazier you were, the groovier you were," says Smith. "Schizophrenics were very much looked up to because they could hallucinate without drugs." The king of the crazies was Charles Manson, the Haight's very own Rasputin. Manson missed the Summer of Love but arrived soon after and lived in a house on the corner of Haight and Cole streets. He was an extreme example, but his basic hustle was a common one. Any would-be guru with the first month's rent and a security deposit could set up a commune in one of the ramshackle Victorian houses where he could play spiritual leader to his gullible followers. Drugs were no longer used to free people's minds but to control them.

The most reckless group to invade the Haight during the Summer of Love, however, didn't have a name until they were dubbed "hoodies" by staffers at the free clinic to distinguish them from genuine hippies. These leather-jacketed kids—often uneducated, many of them possessing criminal records and hailing from working-class backgrounds, unlike the mainly middle-class hippies—didn't arrive wearing flowers in their hair. They came to exploit the hippies they'd seen in magazines or on TV. Tough and aggressive, they drove beat-up hot rods and motorcycles.

Hoodies took any drug they could get their hands on but generally favored injecting crystal methamphetamine. Speed taken in pill form had long been socially acceptable. For years people had ingested five-, 10- and 15-milligram legal doses for everything from weight loss to curing hiccups. But in the early 1960s a new form of the drug appeared: powder cooked up in illegal labs. The hoodies were consuming this crystallized meth in the most direct way (by needle) and in massive doses.

Smith knew environmental factors could exacerbate a drug's toxicity. If the population density was high enough, a relatively small dose of methamphetamine could lead mice either to keel over dead or to start killing one another. Crammed together in dilapidated apartments all over this small urban neighborhood, the speed freaks began to act like the caged mice Smith used to inject. "The speed freaks were the worst," he says. "They were violent; they were paranoid." They preyed on the hippies, who were easy targets. "Like a valley of thousands of plump white rabbits surrounded by wounded coyotes" is how writer Ed Sanders described the scene. The hoodies brought a new, nihilistic edge to drug taking in the Haight. The near-suicidal doses of meth these young people shot into their arms astonished Smith.

Injecting methamphetamine was not a new practice in San Francisco. Ever since the late 1950s, when local doctors began to prescribe liquid ampoules of Methedrine and Desoxyn (brand names for methamphetamine) to help heroin addicts, among them a number of Korean War veterans, kick their addiction, the city had played host to a substantial number of speed freaks. Many physicians believed a suitable treatment for heroin dependency was to substitute the powerful depressant with a powerful stimulant. Just like LSD, liquid methamphetamine was introduced into the general population not by street dealers but by the men in white coats.

Other physicians were motivated more by money than medicine. For the price of a visit, unscrupulous doctors, called script writers, would make out prescriptions for methamphetamine to practically anybody who wandered in off the street. Typically, for less than $10 the intravenous addict would receive a hundred Methedrine ampoules, plus hypodermic needles and sedatives to help with the comedown afterward. A single San

Francisco doctor reportedly prescribed 24,000 ampoules of Methedrine to a hundred patients in one year.

Roger Smith (no relation to Dr. David E. Smith), who headed the Amphetamine Research Project at the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic and was Charles Manson's parole officer, conducted a May 1968 study among local intravenous meth users, titled "The Marketplace of Speed: Violence and Compulsive Methamphetamine Behavior." Roger Smith's study revealed for the first time the underground economy that had sprung up in San Francisco surrounding the Methedrine trade. Addicts who once made a living by burglary or credit-card scams could now support themselves solely by selling meth. They would get the drug from their doctor, keep half the meth for themselves, dilute the other half and sell it on the street.

As early as 1965 Allen Ginsberg had called methamphetamine "a plague on the whole dope industry" and complained that "all the nice, gentle dope people are getting screwed up by the real horror-monster Frankenstein speed freaks who are going around stealing and bad-mouthing everybody." As the summer entered August, meth freaks took the Haight into their grip. A famous flier had started to circulate in the community: "Pretty little 16-year-old middle-class chick comes to the Haight to see what it's all about & gets picked up by a 17-year-old street dealer who spends all day shooting her full of speed again & again, then feeds her 3,000 mikes & raffles off her temporarily unemployed body for the biggest Haight Street gang bang since the night before last. The politics & ethics of ecstasy. Rape is as common as bullshit on Haight Street."

By the end of the summer, David Smith believed meth users were responsible for a disproportionate number of neighborhood crimes. So-called crystal palaces—flophouses where speed freaks went to shoot up—began to replace the communes. Recipes for making meth circulated in the Haight. A gang called the Methedrine Marauders appeared on the streets, its sole purpose to stick up speed dealers. An upsurge in gang rapes, drug rip-offs and murders was blamed on methamphetamine.

Smith admits the clinic was late to realize the extent of the crystal-meth problem in the Haight. Because of the clinic's association with acid heads, speed freaks shied away from it in the early days. But as the summer wound down, a young hoodie named Randy showed up in the waiting room. Randy was a walking epidemic. Among his many illnesses were abscesses the size of golf balls on his arms. He also suffered from a severe skin infection and had contracted hepatitis from sharing needles. When he came down from speed, he was given to bouts of chronic depression characterized by suicidal impulses.

Outside the clinic, people didn't call him Randy. They called him Dr. Zoom. He quickly impressed the clinic's staff not only with the catalog of illnesses he managed to contract but also with his extensive knowledge of the local speed scene. He became in effect a freelance consultant to the medical facility, Smith's guide into the murky netherworld of the new meth subculture.

"He was our intelligence agent in the speed community," says Smith.

Dr. Zoom took Smith to see his first crystal palace, a rundown house on Waller Street where, inside, threatening faces peered out of the gloom and what looked like corpses were stretched out on a floor littered with rusty syringes. In the background a young woman was running around naked and screaming. This wasn't like the communes Smith was accustomed to visiting. The communes could be crowded and unhygienic, but at least they had furniture, not just bare walls and dirty mattresses, and you didn't need a password to enter the premises.

Not long after Smith met Randy, he got a call from him one morning at seven o'clock. Randy was in a panic. The girl he was with had started to freak out. He was worried she would die. "We were having a shoot-out," he explained.

"What's a shoot-out?" asked Smith.

"It's a best-man-left-standing dope contest where one person shoots up speed, then another, then another to see who falls over first."

"That's insane," said Smith.

The doctor hung up the phone, grabbed his medical bag and headed over to Waller Street. When Smith got there, Randy was pacing around, and the girl was on the bed, shaking. She complained her head was pounding, and she thought she was having a heart attack. Her heart rate was 140. Her blood pressure was 180 over 120. Smith injected her with Thorazine and gave her oral phenobarbital; both her blood pressure and pulse dropped to normal levels.

Smith told Randy, "You can't keep doing this. You're going to kill somebody."

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By October the whole scene had suffered a painful demise. A Death of Hippie ceremony, a mock funeral, was held in Golden Gate Park. Through the neighborhood, a group of longhairs carried a coffin labeled SUMMER OF LOVE and stuffed with concert posters. To the sound of Hare Krishna chants and shouts of "Hippies are dead," the casket was set on fire and people tossed LSD tablets into the flames. After the ceremony, one of the participants scribbled a message on the steps of Smith's free clinic: "The Haight was love once. Now, where has all the love gone?"

After temporarily closing in the fall for lack of funds, the clinic's medical center resumed business. Its main task now was to treat methamphetamine casualties of one sort or another. During the winter after the Summer of Love, Smith had a run-in with a mysterious figure rumored to be the biggest crystal-meth dealer in the neighborhood.

Smith had noticed a shady-looking character called Papa Al hanging around the waiting room. He stood out because, in an environment where even some of the clinic staff went barefoot, he always wore a snappy business suit. He also carried a .38 revolver and was constantly accompanied by a husky hoodie named Teddybear.

Papa Al was hatching plans to take over the clinic and use it as a front for his meth-dealing operation. False rumors were circulating in the neighborhood that Papa Al was the free clinic's secret benefactor. The story reached Smith's ears: People were saying a portion of every crystal-meth deal that went down in the Haight went directly to the clinic. Smith approached Papa Al and told him he had to leave.

The next day Smith received word that Papa Al had put out a contract on his life. For $100 worth of speed, Smith would be dead. The doctor went to the police station, but the cops said there was nothing they could do unless Papa Al acted first. "I went back to the clinic, and one of the Hell's Angels was hanging out there," says Smith. "He said, 'Call Sonny Barger [head of the Hell's Angels' Oakland chapter].' So he gives me his number, and I dial up. I said, 'This is Dr. David Smith from the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic.'" Smith explained the situation. He heard back six words.

"We will take care of this."

The next day Barger sent two Angels to Papa Al's place. The Angels told him, "You are Smith's insurance policy. If Smith is hurt crossing the street, you're dead."

Papa Al showed up at the clinic to apologize, pleading for forgiveness.

"Okay," Smith said. "Just don't come around here anymore."

The next day Papa Al disappeared. As Smith puts it today, "He's probably part of a freeway somewhere."

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In late 1968, two days after Christmas, a horrific crime occurred that summed up all that had gone wrong with the Haight. Nineteen-year-old Ann Jiminez, who had traveled from Washington state over Thanksgiving to be part of the hippie scene, was raped and murdered in a crystal palace on Waller Street—the same place where Dr. Zoom once lived—by a group of biker speed freaks. Jiminez, a patient at the free clinic's annex on 409 Clayton Street, had found that life in the Haight was not what she'd expected. She had lost 25 pounds in the first three weeks after she arrived. She was on her way to the clinic when she ended up four blocks away at the crystal palace. Accused of stealing a pair of boots, she was beaten, forced to have anal sex with six bikers while their girlfriends looked on, had her hair clipped and her body shaved and then was left to die with obscenities scrawled on her body in lipstick. Six bikers and three of their girlfriends were arrested and charged with murder.

A girl who knew Jiminez told *The San Francisco Examiner,* "She wanted to swing with the crowd, but she didn't know how."

That winter—barely a year after the Summer of Love had ended—Smith surveyed his neighborhood, and what he saw chilled him. The dream had turned into a nightmare. "Nothing left but freaks and gangsters today," Dr. Zoom told Smith. "It's like a speed-freak heaven, like a dope-fiend bowery." Randy's condition mirrored that of his neighborhood: Dr. Zoom would soon be dead of an overdose.

Looking back over his 40-year career, Smith now compares himself to the Wolf, the Harvey Keitel character in *Pulp Fiction.* "People think I'm friendly with a lot of musicians," he says, "but I would get called in to clean up the blood and brains—the overdoses, the detoxes. They didn't invite me backstage when things were good. They invited me backstage when things went bad."

After the Summer of Love ended, America's first speed scene spilled out of San Francisco into the rest of the country. It moved on steel wheels thanks to the Hell's Angels. The Angels were initially employed as delivery boys but soon came to dominate the drug's production as well. The dangerous science of meth manufacturing spread to other chapters and to rival motorcycle gangs in cities and eventually rural areas, where meth labs are more difficult to detect. Today 10.4 million people have used crystal meth at least once in their life. There are an estimated 257,000 addicts. The meth problem that vexes society today—the exploding labs, the overdoses, the battles with law enforcement—has its roots in the Haight during that strange summer of 1967.

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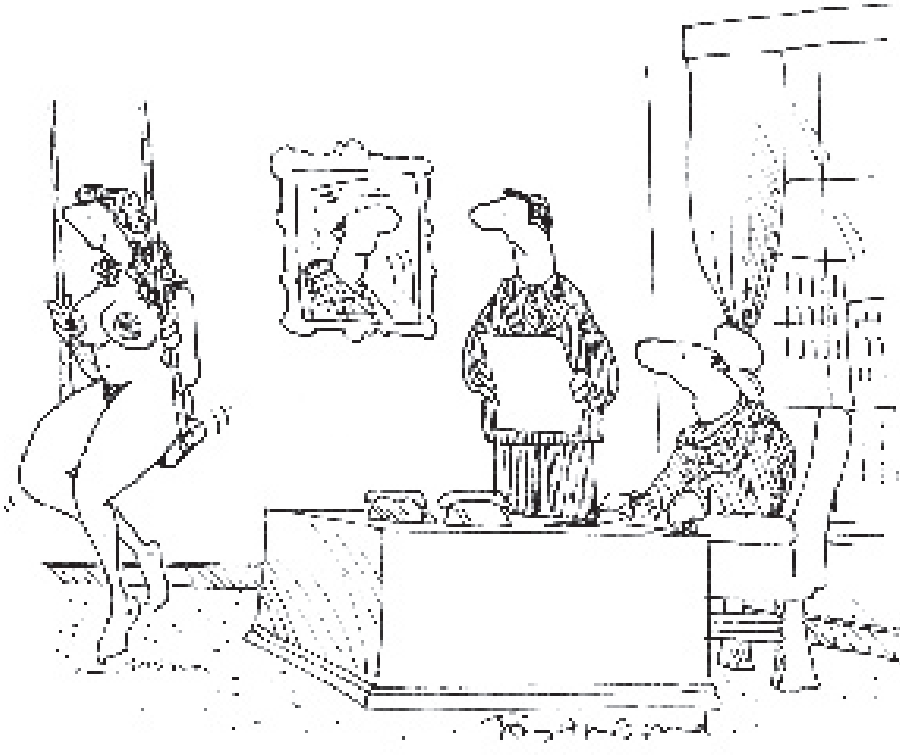
It is springtime 2007. Under a blue sky, Haight Street bustles with nostalgia and commerce. A rusty Volkswagen van painted with flowers puffs down a thoroughfare lined with boutiques, cafes and novelty stores. The shops are named Pipe Dreams, Coffee to the People, Positively Haight Street. The Red Victorian bed-and-breakfast offers individually decorated hippie-themed rooms.

The lineal descendents of the hoodies who flocked to the Haight during the Summer of Love still line the pavement, begging for change. These days they are called gutter punks, raggedly dressed homeless youths with their ever-present pit bulls. One of them holds a cardboard sign that reads TRYING TO GET DRUNK. An uneasy truce exists between the neighborhood's countercultural past and its over-the-counter present. You can still feel the tension between hippie idealism and the edge unique to drug neighborhoods. It is here on every street and in every alley.

As the light starts to fade, the gutter punks carry their bedrolls into the park, looking for a secluded spot in the woods to cook up their dope and bunk down for the night. The demand is great, and the best places go quickly. As surely as the sun will come up, tomorrow will bring new faces, more bodies coming in from the bus station. New hippies, new punks, the same old drugs. The weather is beginning to change. Summer is about to arrive.



"That's Raquel. She helps me think."