

Mother's Little Helper

Bob Fleck

1969

It's mother's little helper that boosts the harried housewife over that mid afternoon hump; an added push to help the busy student deal with last minute cramming to ace that last exam; the wonder drug that makes dieting fast, easy, and effortless—and the liquid fire that eats away bodies and minds from the veins on out.

Speeeeeeed.

It kills.

But how can an innocent little substance like speed, so loved and cherished by America really be deadly?

Because it's a polite poison that's become rather commonplace in our suburban medicine cabinets and executives desk drawers.

Dexedrine, Benzedrine, Methedrine, Desoxyn, Escatrol, Methamphetaminehydrochloride: they're all part of the amphetamine family first developed in the late 1940s during research for metabolic regulators.

At first, physicians were cautious in prescribing amphetamines due to the strength of the uncut compounds. As buffered forms were developed, however, doctors began to use it more casually for many different uses, primarily as a stimulant, an appetite suppressant, and in extreme cases of overweight or compulsive eating.

For back then in the late '50s we were just beginning to get into our now-flourishing habit of pill-popping. Got a cold? Horny? Can't sleep? Sleep too much? Eat too much? Don't eat enough? Constipated?

Well then, just pop a pill and watch your worries fade.

It became easier to prescribe oral medication than to go through a diagnostic trip. With the appearance of miracle drugs, people and doctors began to see medicine as a substitute for good health and body care, which fell prey to the rising tempo of Amerikan life.

Click-click, get up, clack, eat breakfast, zip to the train, zoom to work, type, phone, hassle, choke, gag, scarf, quitting time, crushing crowd, crowded train, home to martinis, TV dinners and hair curlers in bed.

The Amerikan dream awakened into nightmare frenzied morning.

Buy, consume eat, drive, faster, more! The world of tomorrow was finally here today. Send ten cents for tips on how to get ahead, 'cause if you don't, Harry or Stu will. And then that extra week down in Sarasota with the wife and kids won't happen.

So off to the sawbones to see if he has something that'll restore the pep and vigor to get ahead (eat or get eaten, 'ya know).. Sure enough. Just take one of these in the morning and one in the afternoon.

But come nightfall, the eyes have trouble closing, sleep just won't happen. So another shot, or maybe a tranquilizer to help the sandman. And after a while when the morning is thick on your tongue, it really takes two pills to energize the morning.

So it started, Suburban junkies.

Meanwhile, we kids were growing up through junior high into high school exams and college entrance anxiety. We'd all started drinking bottles snatched from the old man's stash.

So when that first college exam rolled around it was no wonder that we raided the homestead again. This time for pills instead of sauce.

One or two dexis made that a little easier. Besides, it didn't quite seem like dope or anything. Like even Mom and Dad took a little just to get along. And Sis discovered that those diet pills doc gave her put a little extra sparkle in her eye and helped conversation roll off the tongue.

That ain't death or addiction, but it was all that was necessary for a friendly push in the right direction.

'Cause when we all began experimenting with drugs in the first half of the decade (or later) almost everybody popped a few ups to sample the supercharged energy trip for a few hours. Coming down though, was a different story.

The dry mouth, razor edged nerves, and shakey hands were usually enough to drop speed from one's favorite dope list. Besides, who the hell wanted to lose 5 or 10 pounds just for the sake of getting high for a few days when doing weed over the same length of time would just leave you a bit sleepy.

Lo, here and there the stone wierdos who would have been alcoholics in a different generation discovered that if you just kept taking enough, you didn't have to come down (at least for a good while). And after a while, those who would have been junkies after being alcoholic discovered that if you got some pure meth-amphetamine crystal, dissolved it in water, and shot it intravenously, the rush was apocalyptic.

Spinning wheels of fire, exploding cosmos of color in your own front room tonight. Turn off the TV and watch the show. At least for a while.

After a few pleasant hours of intense hyperactivity, one starts to not-so-gently descend. What fun. Cold sweat, shakey limbs, nervous twitching, dry, dry mouth and perhaps a raging headache.

So what's to do? Smoke a lot of weed maybe, helps a little. Down a few tranks, but that can really fuck you up metabolically. Well, since the high was so gincliy, why not just do up some more. Oddasite. So it feels like a skyrocket comes up through your head and we're off and running again.

Trouble is, stuff is sorta expensive, like about \$20 a teaspoonful. And if you're running the stuff fairly often, daddy better be rich and gullible or the office better pay a good wage. More often, speedfreaks simply become rip-off (thief) freaks. Which affects friends, relatives and strangers alike. Cause it ain't no fun to come down off a jet-assisted cloud.

And after a while, all the charming symptoms of acute paranoia appear. Oftentimes the sight of the pet cat sauntering in is enough to confirm the suspicion that the Red Chinese are after you with transistorized killer felines.

And as for talking—anyone who'll listen is just fine. Like cleaning women, bus drivers, fish salesmen, lamp posts, and fire hydrants. ANYTHING, just so long as it'll listen.

Thus was born the speed-freak, now an established character in our alternative culture. And where does the speed originate—from labs everywhere across the country where a drop out chemistry student can scrape together some equipment to rival Lilly Co., Parke Davis, Mercke Sharpe & Co., etc.

If it's pharmaceutical quality, its usually in liquid form, and goes for a higher price than bootlegged crystal, which is produced in bulk, broken down into pound and later ounce and spoon quantities. Like heroin, there's a mere thousand percent profit or so down the line from lab to street sales.

There, the consumer forks over the usually ill-gotten bread and shoots away. And along with the above mentioned effects, brain damage begins to occur as the mucus membrane surrounding the brain starts to dry up.

Nice.

Nerve endings are damaged too, so that hands have a permanent twitch, faces continually contort, and reasonable coordination goes out the window.

And once in a while an o.d. (overdose) occurs and someone fries out right on the spot instead of over a period of months or years (common belief has it that speed shooters last two years, and \I have yet to see it disproved).

So coupled with Tricky Dick's grass shortage and our casual attitude towards drugs born out of familiarity, its not uncommon to hear of 14 and 15 year olds getting hung up on speed. Not formally addicted, cause the body doesn't develop a physical craving for amphetamine, but hung up because the come down is so godawful wretched and the high creates such a feeling of detachment from the mundane straight world.

Bennies, leapers, red snappers, psychic energizers, up, crank, crystal, dex, or meth—they're all a drag. A multi-million dollar dort for the drug firms which are profiting off suburbia's need for energy to fit an insane system. A drag on our revolutionary culture for the minds it rots and the bodies it burns out.

If you're sick of plastic kulture then don't do plastic drugs—like speed. There's no need.

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