

Life as minor ends as 21st birthday approaches

By Mark Lage
Staff Reporter

The first time I ever really got drunk was in ninth grade, and the alcohol was courtesy of my friend's parents. They had gone out for the evening, and their well-stocked liquor cabinet was simply too inviting to stay out of.

I don't remember what we drank, or how much, I can only remember having a really great time, up until the point when I found myself in the front yard of my friend's latest crush, him lying face down in his own puke, me trying to console him. Kim, his new love, wasn't home, she was out with some other guy.

"So, what was this you ate earlier today?" I asked, looking at his vomit, unable to think of anything else to say.

"LBJ."
Well, it was a pretty nasty-looking pile, but I was surprised to learn that my friend had eaten former president Lyndon Johnson. Not until sometime the next week did I learn that he had really meant "BLT."

My friend soon sat up, wobbled back and forth, and, with what I had been led to believe were remains of a former president smeared on his face, pronounced in a determined slur "When Kim gets home, I am going to kiss her." Then he fell back into the barf.

Eventually, to save Kim from this horrible threat, I had to drag my friend back to my house, and my mother was slightly less that thrilled with the sight of us.

But despite the ensuing lecture, and despite my poor friend's difficulties, I had immensely enjoyed my first alcohol buzz, and came to the conclusion that I ought to be drunk every day. My problem was that I was only 14, and my friend's parents didn't leave their house every night.

My first regular source didn't

arrive until the second half of my 10th grade year. I had a new group of friends, and one of them had an older brother who was always home, and always willing to contribute to our delinquency. So every weekend night we headed there, made our orders, got the stuff, went somewhere else, drank it and were drunk.

That summer I drifted out of that group, and my junior year ushered in a new best friend and a new method for getting alcohol. It was pretty simple, but I never would have done it myself. We would just pull up in front of a liquor store, and my less than reserved friend would get out and ask people on their way in to buy for us. He got many refusals, but we usually had what we wanted in about fifteen minutes.

Senior year featured more new friends, and my most varied and adventurous year for getting the goods.

Another well-stocked liquor cabinet was involved, one of my friend's mom's, but since we were regular users, we had to be careful not to take noticeable amounts. So we'd clean out an empty two gallon milk container, pour in small portions of eight or nine different kinds of alcohol, mix it all up with some Squirt, and head out with "mixed drinks." Yes, we barfed a lot.

At some point that year we discovered a gas station out in West Omaha that sold beer and would usually not "card" anybody who was old enough to drive in. But none of us was yet man enough to take the taste of beer, we were all more partial to, um, wine coolers. This place only stocked one row of wine coolers, so at the most we could get five four packs of White Mountain, and sometimes we only ended up with one.

But whatever the case, one of us (usually me, because I was the tallest), would go in, clear out the

cooler row, take them up to the counter and pray that we weren't asked for ID.

One time, I was asked for ID. "I don't have any with me," I lied, slightly ticked off. After all, I was a regular customer. "What is this, some kind of new policy, carding everybody, even regular customers?"

"Well, you got part of it right. It is a new policy. But it's more like, the money we made by selling to little kids like you is no longer worth the risk of being found out by the law."

I was stung. I was no little kid. I was a high school senior.

After that, we had to resort to Parker's. Parker's was a liquor store on North 16th St., in one of the shadier parts of Omaha, and for suburbanites like us, one of the scariest. But we went there, because there were always four or five transients in the parking lot, waiting to take money from minors and buy alcohol for them, for a small tip. Or a large tip. Or sometimes they just kept it all.

There's really nothing like driving 25 minutes through town so that you can roll down your window, hand someone you don't know a twenty, and then drive back.

I think the last time we went to Parker's was the time that we spent \$27 for a pint and a half of vodka.

Since I've come to college, the whole process has become much easier, although it's never a sure thing. My friends and I have a pretty regular source these days, an older friend who has earned the title "Keeper of the Weekend." We give him the dough, he opens the gates to fun and relaxation. Or at least to drunkenness.

In less than two weeks, Lincoln will have a brand new "Keeper of the Weekend," -- me. I will finally be a major. It's taken such a long time -- about 21 years, I guess.

I'm looking forward to it, of course, but I'm kind of worried about one thing. After all these years of obstacle course alcohol procurement, the act of just succeeding in getting it seems to be worth about three beers worth of a buzz. By the time you take your first drink, you're already almost drunk with the success at what is sometimes such a trying and frustrating hassle.

So I'm kind of wondering if the alcohol that I legally buy myself will get me as drunk as the stuff that I've been drinking for the last seven years or so. I guess it's not that big of a deal though. If I run out and am not drunk yet, all I have to do is go buy more. If they ask me for ID, all I have to do is show them mine. I'll finally be able to realize my goal of being drunk every day.



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1. Graduate students and students of senior rank (89 or more credit hours on record at the end of the second semester 1988-89), by 4 p.m. Wednesday, March 22.
 2. Students with 53 or more credit hours by 4 p.m. Friday, March 24.
 3. Students with fewer than 53 credit hours by 3 p.m. Friday, April 7.
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| Pre-Session | May 22-June 9 |
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