

Obituary Ken Kesey 1935 – 2001

On Saturday 10 November, Ken Kesey, an iconic figure of sixties counter-culture, died from liver cancer.

Born in Colorado, the son of dairy farmers, he spent most of his life in Oregon. He attended the University of Oregon and after graduating in 1957 became an actor in Hollywood. But he was always interested in writing, and after a year he enrolled in the writing course at Stanford University.

To make money, he volunteered to take part in experiments involving psilocybin, mescaline, amphetamine and LSD. His job as an orderly in the psychiatric ward of the local Veterans Administration Hospital provided the inspiration for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

In 1964, he and his merry band of pranksters – including Kerouac hero Neal Cassidy and the Grateful Dead – famously drove across America in a psychedelic school bus labelled 'Weird Load'.

After numerous stops for parties and 'happenings' they arrived in New York, where Ken Kesey met Kerouac, poet Allen Ginsberg and LSD guru Timothy Leary. The epic was recounted in Tom Wolfe's 1968 book, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*.

Eventually, Kesey gave up life in the fast lane. Like Leary, his creative interests turned to the Internet. He taught writing at the University of Oregon and raised beef cattle on an Oregon farm. At the time of his death, he was working on a film about the Pranksters.

For continuing Pranking <http://www.intrepidtrips.com/>

UK still tops the drug league

The latest Annual report from the EMCDDA shows that the UK still has the highest level of drug use across the whole range of drugs.

The UK has:

- With France, the highest use of cannabis among 15-16 year olds
- Double the rate of ecstasy and amphetamines use among adults
- Rising heroin use – against the trend in some other countries

Cocaine use is a particular concern to the EMCDDA and was reported as the main trend of concern across Europe.

Drug trends among young people in England show a slight increase from last year in the recent Department of Health survey findings of *Drug Use, Smoking and Drinking among Young People in 2000*.

The research showed:

- Over one third (36%) of pupils had at some point been offered at least one drug.
- Twenty eight per cent had been offered cannabis, 17% a 'stimulant' and 6% heroin.
- Sixty one per cent of pupils had been

offered drugs by the age of 15, compared with only 15% who had had this experience by the age of 11.

- Around one pupil in six (16%) reported that they had ever used one or more drugs and 14% had done so in the last year.
- Among 15 year olds, 32% of pupils had ever used drugs, 29% had used drugs in the last year and 21% had used drugs in the last month. Cannabis was by far the most widely used drug.
- Twelve per cent reported use of cannabis in the last year.
- Every other individual drug had been used in the last year by no more than 3%, with a total of 4% using any Class A drug in this period.

New figures from Scotland present a 'more accurate picture' of the number of problem drug misusers at both national and local level. The report, *Estimating the National and Local Prevalence of Problem Drug Misuse in Scotland*, was compiled by the Centre for Drug Misuse Research at the University of Glasgow and the Scottish

On a lighter note...

New tool for anti-drug campaigners

Anti-drugs campaigners may have one more hammer in their toolkit in their war against drugs. Having negotiated threats of escalation into heroin or cocaine addiction, amotivational syndrome or corporate drugs tests, cannabis users are soon to be hit with the clanger that their willies may be shrinking and unwittingly lowering their nation's average penis size. Many men in China and Malaysia have been suffering from Koro or 'turtles head' for years. Only now is it becoming clear that the syndrome could be threatening the shores and trousers of the US.

According to an article in *Addiction*¹ the syndrome, described as an acute panic reaction to penile retraction, occurs only among those who have a current fear of a retracting willy. This fear, the study proposes, is found only in men previously exposed to information about the syndrome's existence and manifested by a heavy or atypical cannabis binge. This can then result in an obsessive panic that the penis may be shrinking and, in some way can lead to actual penile retraction. Conspiracy theorists will no doubt blame the East for spreading this debilitating fear westwards, citing it as yet another threat to national security. Americans may soon be told that not only is cannabis bad for health, your career and the economy, it is bad for America's willies and the country as a whole.

1. Mitchell Earleywine, Cannabis-induced Koro in Americans, *Addiction* (2001) 96,1663-1666

Centre for Infection and Environmental Health.

Its key findings were:

- An estimated 55,800 problematic drug misusers.
- Of these, an estimated 22,800 are injecting.
- 55,800 problematic drug misusers correspond to a prevalence rate of 2 per cent of the Scottish population aged between 15 and 54. By council area, the highest prevalence rates are in Glasgow (3.8 per cent) and Dundee City (3.5 per cent).
- An estimated 10,000 Hepatitis C Virus infected injectors.

Previously it was estimated that there were 30,000 problematic drug misusers in Scotland. The research defined problematic drug misuse as use of opiates and benzodiazepines, including methadone. For a copy of the EMCDDA report go to <http://annualreport.emcdda.org>