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PSYCHE DELICIES IN THE DORMS

Photos by Missy Iio and graphic by Heather Schuler / Dakota Student

The story of one wild residence hall, one acid tab and one shattered life

Diane Newberry
Dakota Student

On a fateful night near the beginning of the 2016 spring semester, Parker Ellis laid in the hallway of Bek Hall waiting for God - in a figurative sense, and, for him, in a very tangible sense as he was under the influence of LSD.

Ellis had been a typical, straight-laced aviation student. He had successfully finished his private pilot's license in his first semester, and had begun working on his instrument rating. He was also looking forward to a high-achieving future with the University of North Dakota Flying Team. The stress of all this, however, took a toll.

Ellis didn't often partake in risky behavior. He rarely drank and never so much as touched tobacco. Despite his general self-discipline, his surroundings offered constant temptation. In his time there, Bek Hall had a definitive party culture.

"Everybody knew everybody in Bek," Ellis said. "It was like literally a town in there and it seemed like everybody was just there to party and do drugs (...) and have sex."

Ellis's friend, a fellow aviation student and resident of Bek Hall, "Charlie" (who wishes to remain anonymous) said he felt the tone was set in Bek by a large contingent of residents who were involved in Greek life.

"They would always come back drunk or with booze and just be pretty crazy, you know?" Charlie said. "The party continued when they got back to Bek. And it just sort of like, always encouraged people to kind of get loose - especially the freshmen who were like me. We didn't rush; we didn't get invited to parties. But we saw a little snippet of it when they got back. It made it ever-present in our minds."

In trying to accurately capture a typical weekend in Bek, Charlie recalled one night when "one kid who had eaten a pot brownie that was crazy strong (...) was so stoned he couldn't move. We had two kids on LSD, running around, tripping balls. I think Parker and I were on cough syrup (...) and pretty much everyone else was drunk, or stoned or both."

Cough syrup was Ellis's first foray into mind-bending substances. It had been suggested by another Bek resident and became popular among Ellis's friends. Many over the counter cough syrups contain Dextromethorphan Hydrobromide, which has hallucinogenic properties in high doses.

"You know - it's just, it's easy," Ellis said. "It's an easy excuse. If you get drug tested for it, you know it's like, 'Well I had a cold so I took Robitussin. That's why it's in the system.' I don't think anyone would nick you for that."

Ellis had taken cough syrup once or twice before becoming interested in the prospect of LSD, which was sold by someone in the dorm. The appeal of LSD was the same as the appeal of cough syrup: it would not show up in the random drug testing conducted by the aviation program, and thus not put Ellis's career path in jeopardy.

"That's why I went for that rather than weed," said Ellis. "Because weed shows up. Acid doesn't. So for me, it was always like, 'How can I have the most fun without suffering serious consequences?'"

Kal Datz, President of the UND dual-chapter Psychedelics and Students for Sensible Drug Policy Club, said this casual treatment of LSD as a lower risk drug is typical of young people who have only done cursory research into it.

"When people, when (aviation)

students, are looking for a vacation out of life, whatever you want to call it, however you want to describe it, they're looking up LSD - they're reading about it and they're reading that it's a relatively safe drug

"One thing that was brilliantly kind of ironic and sad was as a freshman, you were required to live in the dorms, and I don't think Parker or I wanted to be there. And we probably wouldn't have been there and we wouldn't have been exposed to all this."

"Charlie," Aviation student and resident of Bek Hall

as far as overdoses go," Datz said.

The overdose risk is low in LSD, and it's true that it will not show up in a standard drug test. However, there are still risks, particularly if the "LSD" is actually a different chemical compound entirely. LSD is difficult to synthesize, which leads to cheaper and easier alternatives being passed off as the real thing.

"It's not very often LSD that they're buying and some of these drugs that they're buying have an overdose threshold as low as two hits," Datz said. "They might take two or three hits of this 'LSD' and have some dangerous side effects."

In the last few years, a chemical called 25INEOME has been especially prevalent in the Grand Forks area, being passed off as LSD unknowingly by dealers. It's impossible to know whether the substance Ellis ingested that day nearly two years ago was LSD in its purest form, but what is clear is the twelve hours that followed were a wild ride for Ellis and those around him, and would ultimately change the course of his life.

Ellis and Charlie had initially bought LSD together and planned on taking it together as well. How-

ever, Charlie had obligations when Ellis had a free day, and he decided to take it alone. Ellis describes the first five to six hours of his trip as "one of the best experiences of (his) life." Things began

to go downhill quickly, however.

The next several hours were filled with paranoia, as Ellis describes an endless cycle of napping, wandering the halls of Bek and feeling judged by the friends and roommates around him. Eventually, the trip took a religious turn when Ellis became convinced that he had died.

"I thought I was in purgatory because I was in the same dorm," Ellis said. "I'm not in heaven, I'm not in hell. It's not hell, but it feels like it kind of, but it's not like hell-ish. (...) Time wasn't moving so I was like, 'I'm in purgatory.' I grabbed my Bible and I held onto it."

It was at this point that Ellis began his hallway vigil, waiting for God.

"I think that place needed a little God, maybe," said Charlie.

As the hours progressed, Ellis became increasingly depressed and anxious. He began to try to leave Bek, only to be dragged back in by friends anxious about being caught. The culmination of the trip was his running back and forth between the dorm and a nearby church, believing that if he could convert those around him, he would redeem himself and escape purga-

tory. He was loud, and, according to Charlie, yelling religious verses up to the sky and harassing groups of party-goers on University Avenue. The cops were called in the confusion, possibly by a resident advisor, and Ellis was arrested.

In the proceeding weeks, Ellis was put on a two-year flight suspension by the university. He had to quit the Flying Team. His Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Medical Certification, which every pilot needs to legally fly, was revoked due to his drug usage. He could stay and attend classes if he wished, but since he would no longer be able to pursue aviation, it was more economical to move home to California and earn his credits at a community college. He felt as though he had lost everything.

"I was like, 'What the fuck do I have waiting for me at home?'" Ellis said. "My dog and an application to community college. And I had all this stuff left on the table that I had lost in a period of two days."

It's a dramatic story of one poor decision gone awry - a cautionary tale for any student looking to party with no consequences. At the heart of it is one young man who seemed to his friends and acquaintances to be the unlikely victim. It would be difficult to say what influenced Ellis's decision the most: the overwhelming stress of the rigorous UND aviation department can put on students, or the toxic dorm culture that encouraged casual use of serious drugs.

"One thing that was brilliantly kind of ironic and sad was as a freshman, you were required to live in the dorms," Charlie said. "And I don't think Parker or I wanted to be there. And we probably wouldn't have been there and

Story continued on next page.

Rethinking the college experience



Dakota Student File Photo

UND students study in recently renovated spaces on the second floor of the Chester Fritz Library.

Aimee Coons Dakota Student

The fall semester is ending at a rapid pace. Students are scrambling to finish papers, complete projects and attempting to start studying for their finals. As I sit trying to organize my week, my to do lists for homework is growing at a baffling rate.

I am a senior this year, and will be graduating (hopefully) in the spring with a bachelor's degree in English. On top of my class load, I have two jobs, a 4-year-old son and I am attempting to prepare to apply to master's degree programs. Needless to say, my plate is full.

As I talk with my classmates, I found, not to my surprise, that their plates are just as full as mine. Students are pulling their hair out trying desperately to keep up with a full course load of 16-19 credit hours, work enough hours to support themselves financially and attempting a few hours' rest at night. With my son turning five next year, I have started looking at schools for him and seeing what the elementary education system looks like. The discussion of homework for young children has been a conversation for many years, and there are many ongoing studies on the effects of too much homework on young children.

As I read through the many articles and opinion pieces on elementary homework load, I began to wonder why college students are so overloaded, yet no one seems to say or do anything about the problem.

Unfortunately, college students have many things working against them. The largest of these problems is money. Not just money to pay for school and books, but money to pay for food, housing, clothing, a car, gas, cell phone, insurance and other miscellaneous out of pocket expenses that always pop up.

Most college students will not have a job that pays over ten dollars an hour, and will most likely have to work around 20-30 hours a week just to

keep afloat. Pair that with a 16-19 credit hour school schedule and study time and it's no wonder college students are sleep deprived.

It's time to change how we go to college. I think we can all agree that college is too expensive, but that is another article in itself. College is supposed to help students be prepared to enter to their field of study. This requires study time in school, internships, hands on practice with their work, etc.

With the way students are pressured to take as many courses as possible, it adds additional stress for students to find the time to find internships and job experience in their field. On top of that, many internships are unpaid, which would cause financial stress to the student.

There is this idea that students need to finish a bachelor's degree in four years. I hear chatter from students all the time "I need to graduate on time!" or "I won't graduate on time. I am going to be a super senior." We are not in high school anymore and should not be held to this class system of defining students.

College is a place of learning, not a social class system of grade levels. The world is changing and it's extremely obvious that the economic situation has changed over the past 10 years alone. Colleges need to change and grow with the times by adapting to the lives that college students now live.

Just going to classes and not working is a thing of the far past. Colleges should adapt their requirements for full time students to better fit the lives of students today. Setting full time status at nine credits and encouraging students to look for internships and jobs that would give them work experience would work better for their schedules.

Lessening the workload per class would also help adapt to the times. Yes, as students we would most likely have to take more classes and be in school longer. However, in the long run we will not have burnt ourselves out in the process and we will have allowed ourselves the time gain work

experience in the field before completing our degree plan.

Henry David Thoreau states in his novel "Walden": "'But,' says one, 'you do not mean that the students should go to work with their hands instead of their heads?' I do not mean that exactly, but I mean something which he might think a good deal like that;

I mean that they should not play life, or study it merely, while the community supports them at this expensive game, but earnestly live it from beginning to end. How could youths better learn to live than by at once trying the experiment of living?"

Thoreau's novel was published in 1854. It is time to start learning from this great

philosopher's ideas and start adapting them into the college experience. College students should not have to study or work themselves to death. They should be granted the experience of life in addition to a good education.

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Continued from front
we wouldn't have been exposed to all this. (...) Parker's life wouldn't have been screwed up if he hadn't been required to be in the dorm."
Today, things are looking brighter for Ellis. He has been regularly going to see an Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) and has been passing twice-monthly drug tests for 16 months. So far, he has appealed to the FAA to reinstate his Medical Certificate twice and been denied both times due to the nature of the LSD incident, but he hopes his upcoming attempt, which his

AME is filing this month, will be successful. He should hear from the FAA by February.
Though the legal process has been fraught, Ellis says he never once thought of giving up on his dream of being a pilot. In fact, he even claims he has no regrets about his past actions. Though the initial loss was shattering, he says he thinks it gave him life experience and wisdom that he might not have gotten had he followed the straightforward path set out for him by UND's rigid system.
"I would say everybody in aviation that doesn't go out

and party, that doesn't go out and do drugs, that hasn't gone to jail and hasn't paid the price, is someday going to hit 25 or 30 years old and they're going to make a decision like I did and they're not going to know the price of it," Ellis said. "And when you're 30 and set in a career, it's a lot more devastating than when I had taken it. (...) So I learned the lesson young. I learned that lesson the hard way."

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Devon Abler / Dakota Student

People sign a card accompanying the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree during a stop in downtown Grand Forks on Sunday morning.

Tree shuts down downtown

Devon Abler
Dakota Student

Grand Forks had an unusual visitor stop by on Sunday. A portion of downtown Grand Forks was blocked off to make room for the Capitol Christmas Tree, also known as the people's tree. This year the tree was harvested from Kootenai National Forest, located in the northwest corner of Montana. This tree will travel over 3,000 miles before reaching Washington, D.C. Moving a tree is no easy feat. Larry Spiekermeier, a trucker from Plains, Montana, has been hauling goods for over 49 years. He was chosen to transport the tree from Montana to Washington, D.C. due to having the highest safety record for the past 16 years and recognition

of being the Montana state driver of the year in 2009 and 2015. He also reached the "One Million Mile Club" in 2015, logging 1.6 million accident free miles. "This is the crown jewel of the driving career right here," Spiekermeier said. "Whitewood (trucking) has an excellent driving safety record for the past 18 years and I have been honored to be a part of it." An 80-foot Engelmann spruce, the tree was decorated with ornaments and encased within a trailer for protection against any damage before reaching the capitol. The tree was harvested not with a chainsaw, but with a traditional crosscut saw. According to capitolchristmastree.com, this is a process "officials say has never been used before to cut down previous national trees." Montana decided to harvest the tree in this nontra-

ditional way to honor the history of the lumberjacks. Members of the community gathered around the trailer, signing the banners that hung down its sides. "The tree has a name: Lady Elaine," Spiekermeier said. "The ornaments that are on the tree right now are just for show, but there is a truck that is carrying 13,000 ornaments going down there and we will put them on the tree when we reach the capitol." Lady Elaine will make about 20 stops in six different states before arriving at Joint Base Andrews. She will then be delivered to the U.S. Capitol and be on display outside of the Capitol building. Making the journey from the far end of Montana to Washington, D.C. is rather time consuming. "We started the drive four days ago. It takes

about two weeks with all of the stops because this is for the people," Spiekermeier said. "We are set to arrive in D.C.

at the event wearing Santa hats and passing out candy to the children. Corporal Dan (last name omitted by officer's request),

through events like these." The children were certainly excited to see the GFPD department handing out candy and dressed in Santa hats. Vendors were also present in the town square handing out doughnuts, hot chocolate and coffee to the observers. Lady Elaine left Grand Forks at 10 a.m. and continued on her journey to Washington, D.C. Her next stop will be in Springfield, Missouri on Nov. 21, Poplar Bluff, Missouri and Paducah, Kentucky on Nov. 22, and finally reaching Joint Base Andrews on Sunday, Nov. 26. Check out capitolchristmastree.com or follow the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree on Facebook.

"The ornaments that are on the tree right now are just for show, but there is a truck that is carrying 13,000 ornaments going down there and we will put them on the tree when we reach the capitol."

Larry Spiekermeier, a truck driver from Plains, Montana

on the 27th. This is the people's tree and for the people of America." This was an exciting event for the community as well. Families brought their children to see the tree, meet the trucker and write wishes of good tidings to the president. The Grand Forks Police Department was present

a member of GFPD, spent the morning mingling with the community. "This isn't just a tree," Dan said. "This is the Capitol tree. The GFPD is here to spread some Christmas cheer and mingle with the community. One of my favorite things about my job is helping people and getting to know them

Devon Abler is a staff writer for Dakota Student. She can be reached at devon.abler@und.edu

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GOLD ON REPEAT

Fighting Hawks volleyball wins Big Sky championship

Nick Nelson
Dakota Student

SACRAMENTO, California -- The UND volleyball team clinched the Big Sky Conference championship after a contentious five-set match-up against Sacramento State late Saturday night. Though the Fighting

Hawks won the first set, Sacramento pulled ahead and won the next two. UND rallied to win the fourth and fifth sets to earn their second consecutive Big Sky Conference title. With a career-high 19 kills and seven blocks in Saturday's championship, middle hitter Faith Dooley was named Big

Sky tournament MVP. Senior setter Sydney Griffin earned her second career triple-double with 56 assists and 11 digs. The Fighting Hawks Big Sky Conference record now stands at 12-4 and 30-7 overall as they advance to their second berth at the NCAA Division I volleyball tournament. Their opponents will be announced during the NCAA Selection Show on Sunday, Nov. 26.

SET	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
UND	25	24	18	25	15
Sac. St.	19	26	25	15	10

Nick Nelson is the photo editor for Dakota Student. He can be reached at nicholasgnelson@gmail.com



Photos by Kyle Zimmerman / Dakota Student





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