

Marijuana and Severed Limbs (8/10/06)

By Wes J. Pimentel

This next piece is not observational. This is the true story of how I was introduced to two things at the same time as a child; marijuana and severed limbs.

My uncle loves to fish. Throughout my childhood he took us on quite a few fishing trips. This story takes place aboard a fishing boat on one of these trips.

There we were, on a boat in the Atlantic. I remember my mother being there, along with my brother and cousins. I'm sure there were other adults from my family around, but I don't remember whom.

It was late at night and I was at one of the tables where people eat, with a bunch of the boat people. I mean the guys who work for the company that puts the boat in the water. I don't know what they're called; deckhands, maybe? If we were in earlier times they'd be called pirates. These guys were grimy, salty, scruffy, bearded ruffians. The type of people you'd walk away from if you saw them on some dark street at night. Now, at this point you're probably thinking, 'what is this child doing around all these unsavory characters late at night?' Good question. Well, three important factors led to this situation. One, I don't get seasick, so I didn't have to lie down in misery and sleep it off like my mom and brother. Two, I used to have real bad trouble sleeping, so I was wide awake. Third, and most important, I have **never** had an interest in fishing, whatsoever. If they were pulling hammerheads out by the dozen I wouldn't have cared. This, at the time, seemed to be where the most interesting people on the boat were.

So, there I was, sitting next to "Lefty" as he was preparing to finish a joint he had obviously started earlier that day. I'm saying obviously now, but at the time I had no idea what he was doing. I'll tell the rest of the story from the young, inexperienced perspective I lived with at the time.

I'm sitting next to this big, fat bearded white man who obviously didn't give a shit about my presence, which was cool, because he was kind of scary. He weighed about two-hundred and fifty pounds, had reddish blonde hair pouring off his face and down his back and was wearing a blue and green flannel, rolled up above his elbows. He pulled out a cigarette pack, reached deep into it and produced what looked like the ripped-off tip of a cigarette that had been snubbed-out. He did all this with only his right hand, as his left arm had been severed right below the elbow.

At this point in my life I had never encountered a severed limb. As my face was at table-level due to my size, I had a front-row seat for the whole event and I was staring at this poor guy's nub, as children will. This took place before 1988, so I'm assuming the strange qualities of this surgical alteration are due to a lack of advancement in medical science. Either way, this guy's half-arm looked weird. At the time, I had nothing to which to compare, so I was trippin' regardless, because I had never seen anything like it. Now that I look back, though, I can say this guy's arm (or partial lack, thereof) was truly unique. It didn't taper to a clean, round end like we see today. It had sort of a mini-nub in the center of the end, about the same diameter as a dime. This nublet was flush with the



end of the arm, which itself was kind of cylindrical, like it had been chopped off and covered with skin.

The reason why this particular feature stood out to me is because he used it as a roach clip (kind of). After pulling the half-smoked item out of his cigarette pack, “Redbeard” proceeded to stick it into the flesh crease between the nubkin and the rest of his arm while he lit it. At this point my child’s mind was racing with pre-adolescent questions. Where did the rest of this guy’s arm go? Doesn’t that hurt? What the hell is that little round thing, a finger? Is that a cigarette? If so, why not just light a new one? How can he hold the lighter so close to that nubby? Doesn’t *that* hurt? Why does that cigarette smell like that? Is that what they smell like when you light them the second time? These guys all have plenty of cigarettes, why are they all sharing this funny-smelling one? Aren’t these guys repulsed by the fact that he just had it tucked into his half-arm skin-bump fold? What the fuck is going on here? Is *this* what white people do when no one’s looking? At this point I was yanked away from the table by some responsible adult from my family, whom I cannot name to this day because I was so mesmerized by this whole event. I don’t remember anything else from this fishing trip, as I was too young, but the fascination and slight trauma of this particular incident managed to sear this much of it into my memory forever.