

OP/ED

A beer runs through it: a journey

In light of Alcohol Awareness week, Gabe Uhr reminisces about his underage days

Long ago when I was underage, my father said to me, "No. You cannot have a beer." Needless to say, my interest in alcohol developed long before I was of legal drinking age.

In America, such modern rites of passages revolve around age. In Virginia, when you're 16 you can get your driver's license. At 18 you can buy cigarettes or join the military, both of which can kill you. I think we're allowed to vote at 18, but that might just be a rumor.

It's not until you're 21-years-old that you're allowed to buy alcohol. After that, the only age-based rites of passage are presidential and congressional candidacy (I would like to take this moment to announce my own candidacy; Vote Uhr in 2011) and senior citizens discounts.

Let's get the order for these rites down. First, you go from Mario Kart to an automobile. Then you can give yourself cancer, die for your country and also elect the most powerful man in the world (no, not Bill Gates).

Three years later, you can buy a beer, a simple alcoholic beverage brewed from malt and hops. The drinking age reflects that America may not have her priorities straight, but that's because America has a drinking problem. The problem being that you can't buy beer until you're 21.

I used to be one of the people that complained about the drinking age, but that was before I became legal. Magically, the moment I turned 21, my liver suddenly began to metabolize alcohol at a legal rate. That day I cele-

brated by killing a small portion of my magical liver.

Now that I'm 21, I think back fondly on my illustrious underage drinking career. I started my career long before I was binge drinking at JMU (School motto: If you didn't black out, you didn't go out).

It all started in high school. Maybe, if the drinking age had been lower, it wouldn't have been as much fun to bong skunky beer that my friends and I stole and hid in the woods for a week. We thought we were pretty slick. Our parents had no idea, or so we thought. Over the last Thanksgiving break, I bought a twelve pack of Heineken at the store. I was nervous when I bought it; I felt like I was trying to pass off a fake. Luckily, the fake was me, and I was real.

My mom came into the kitchen as I was putting the beers into the fridge. I gave her a guilty smile and she smiled back. "You bought the good stuff, huh?" she asked. "Gabriel, you've sure moved up from the days of carrying around Beast Lite in that blue backpack." With that, she smiled again and walked away. I was busted, which goes to show that parents aren't as dumb as they look.

Teenagers, however, are as dumb as they look. Did you know Eskimos have more than 200 different words for snow? It makes sense when you think about how prevalent snow is in the life of an Eskimo. Similarly, teenagers have more than 200 different words for vomiting. Here are just a few: ralph, blow chunks, throw it in reverse and bark at the ground.

Teenagers can also turn almost any word into a synonym for getting drunk. For example: floored, hammered,

ripped, housed, faced, etc. I like to be creative; here are some new ones: Hansoned, Kennedied, muffed, arrested.

Speaking of arrested, I got arrested last year for underage possession. In lieu of a conviction, I chose to complete Virginia's Alcohol Safety Action Program (ASAP). They call it ASAP, but it took me almost an entire semester to complete.

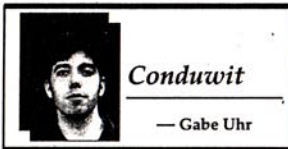
Part of the program was to remain abstinent for 10 weeks. I said, "No problem. I can go without sex for 10 weeks easy. I do it all the time." Then the instructor told me I had to abstain from alcohol. This was a lot more serious. I don't need to drink to have a good time; I need to drink to fall asleep at night.

Seriously, if I learned anything in the class, it was that drinking and driving is the stupidest thing a person can do, besides majoring in English and minoring in philosophy.

After all, the Surgeon General clearly states, "Consumption of alcoholic beverages impairs your ability to drive a car or operate heavy machinery." The Surgeon General also said, "Drinking greatly increases your chances of getting lucky," but that wouldn't fit on the bottle.

I've mentioned how glad I am to finally be 21. I didn't mention how much fun it is to go to the liquor store, buy beer at Farmer Jack's, or proudly show ID to a bartender. Not everything has been perfect since I turned 21 though; some people still think my name is Alfonso and that I'm a 34-year-old native of New Jersey.

Gabe Uhr is a senior English major who reminds you to know when to say when.



Conduwit

— Gabe Uhr