



VICTORY CELEBRATION — Brad Barnes (right), chairman of the NCWC College Republicans, congratulates new Nash County Sheriff Jimmy Grimes and Scottie, his new lieutenant. Barnes led the pledge of allegiance to begin the "Celebrate the Winning Team" festivities at the Nashville National Guard Armory on Monday. The celebration was held to honor Grimes and other local Republican winners. Nash County is one of 32 counties in North Carolina that elected Republican sheriffs in the November election. Rep. Gene Arnold (R-Nash), Rep. Leo Daughtry (R-Johnston), and state Republican chairman Jack Hawke were also part of the celebration.

GRE to be computerized

Students who plan on taking the new computerized version of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) can leave their No. 2 pencil at home next year, while test-takers of the Graduate Management Association Test (GMAT) will need a sharp pencil to get through a new writing portion of the standardized test.

The GRE, administered by Educational Testing Services in New Jersey, is moving away from its paper and pencil version to a completely computerized format. Students can now take the test while sitting at a computer, and answer questions by clicking the computer mouse on the appropriate icon. Once the test is complete, students can learn their scores before leaving the test location.

Charlotte Kuh, executive director of the GRE, said that the reason for changing the test's format was based more on methodology than technology.

"We decided to make the test less linear and more adaptive," Kuh said. "And the computerization allows us to put in some new types of questions."

Unlike the paper and pencil version, the computerized version of the GRE does not allow students to go back and fill in or correct their answers. All students begin with a question at a medium level. If the student answers a question correctly, the next question that appears is more difficult. If the student picks the wrong answer for the first question, an easier one pops up next.

Jose Ferreira, director of GRE programs for Kaplan Educational Centers, said that while the computerized GRE does offer some benefits for students, not every feels comfortable sitting in front of a computer screen.

"Some people will probably find the format intimidating," he said. "Students won't be able to change their answers or write up a problem in their test booklets."

You will be able to use official Educational Testing Services scratch paper, however.

After contemplating graduate school for the two years after her graduation from the University of Dayton in Ohio, Chicago resident Jean Andover took the new GRE in October. She was hoping to begin work on her master's degree in the spring and needed test results quickly before application deadlines.

After learning about the new option, she learned where the nearest testing location was and set up an appointment for the next day.

"There were about three weeks between when I signed up for the test and when I found out where I'd be going to school," says Landover. "The fact that you know your score when you leaves makes all the difference in the world."

But do students who are on the borderline want to know their scores right away? Andover thinks so. "I did well, so obviously, I was happy," she said. "But even if your grade is not as high as you need it, you know

right then and there. You don't have to sit at home worried sick waiting for the mail."

Those who opt for the computerized version will end up paying nearly twice as much as those who take the test in its original format, which is \$93 instead of the normal price of \$48. But for Andover, the extra money was well worth it.

"The fact that I was able to take the test on my own terms instead of on a morning I had to set months in advance was worth the extra money to me," she says. "It was a lot less stressful than an ordinary test."

Due to the increased awareness of the importance of writing in the business world, test officials at the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) have changed its format for the first time since it was created in 1964. A writing section has been added to the new test that will measure a student's communication skills.

Beginning Oct. 15, the GMAT essay became a mandatory section of the exam. Students now have to write two essays, one analyzing a business issue and the other arguing a selected point of view.

The writing section is divided into 30-minute halves and brings the test's total time to about four hours.

The essay portion then is graded by GMAT officials, and the GMAT grade and a copy of the essay itself are then sent to each school to which the applicant applies.

Laughing gas becomes new 'hippie crack'

By WENDI WILLIAMS

You may have seen those little metal pellets around campus. You might have even watched friends at concerts as they inhaled gas from balloons or plastic bags and then laughed their heads off. They're sniffing nitrous oxide — known as "hippie crack" at some schools — which is becoming an increasingly popular way for students to get high.

It's become so pervasive because it's cheap — \$1 buys a whippet pellet — and it's easy to get. Nitrous oxide is also called laughing gas, the same kind dentists use, and it's most commonly used as a propellant for whipped cream cans.

Nitrous oxide is especially popular on college campuses because many students do it at raves and at concerts, particularly the Grateful Dead shows and other outdoor festivals where it's not unusual to see a guy carting around a tank of the gas and selling it for \$5 a balloon-full, says Kayla Kirkpatrick, youth program coordinator for the International Institute on Inhalant Abuse in Englewood, Colo.

Whippets are sold by the case at gourmet stores for use in cake decorating and other food preparation, but they also can be bought at head and porno shops. A few states, such as Ohio, have decreed that nitrous oxide can only be sold for food or dental purposes, but it's legal in all 50 states. The Food and Drug Administration says N2O is neither a dangerous drug or food product.

"Students think that because they see whippets around all the time and because the dentist uses it, it must be okay," Kirkpatrick says. "But the difference is that dentists are using nitrous oxide in a controlled environment, and they've been trained to use it properly."

The laughing gas dentists use, Kirkpatrick says, is 80 percent oxygen as opposed to the 100 percent nitrous oxide inhaled in whippets or gas-filled balloons.

People who sniff nitrous oxide get an immediate rush that often makes them laugh and feel dizzy and euphoric. Because the

gas has replaced oxygen in the blood stream, it also makes the sniffers' hands and feet tingle and can cause them to lose their balance. The high, which produces a psychological addiction, lasts only a few minutes and compels users to inhale more and more to reach new levels of euphoria.

Most people get hangover-like headaches the next day, but prolonged users can damage their bone marrow, reproductive systems and brain. Sometimes it makes people pass out; some even die.

The International Institute on Inhalant Abuse (IIIA) reports 34 deaths nationwide have been caused from nitrous oxide or other fumes. But Kirkpatrick emphasizes that there are no accurate U.S. death statistics, because inhalants often contribute to death but may not be the actual cause of it. Take, for example, the case of the 21-year-old suburban Chicago man who drowned in a pool after doing whippets. Inhaling the gas caused him to pass out and fall off a raft he was floating on. The coroner ruled his death was by drowning.

In England, though, the IIIA estimated that one-fifth of all first-time sniffers died.

"It can be a mind-altering thing," says Eleanor Sargent, a counselor at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). "It's such a waste to see so much potential in wonderful people who take a sniff of something and who don't come back to their original selves."

NIDA estimates that 300,000 people between the ages of 18 and 25 used inhalants in 1991, and that as the trend has become more popular, it's also become more widely accepted. Inhalants are considered the fourth most popular drug in America, behind alcohol, tobacco and marijuana, according to recent NIDA studies.

Nitrous oxide tends to be the gas of choice on college campuses while abuse of other inhalants, such as gasoline, air fresheners and nail polish, is being seen more and more among younger kids, some only in grade school, NIDA's Sargent says.