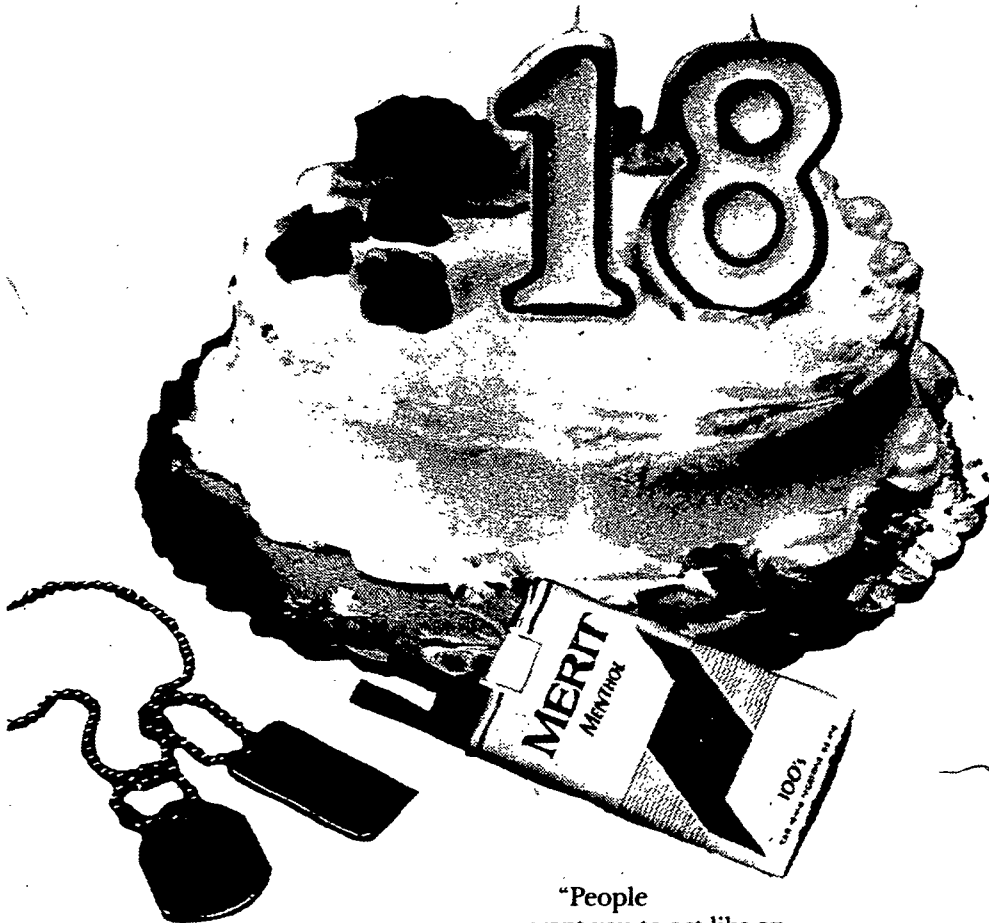


On the MOVE



COOL of a

Many teens dream of the day when they will be considered "grown up" — an adult in the eyes of society and thus having full rights.

But when it comes to deciding who is an adult and who isn't, it depends on the particular right being considered.

Take Ben Edwards, for example. He received his driver's license when he was 17 years old, one year after he became eligible. He was able to vote after turning 18, and cast ballots in school-district and presidential elections in 1996.

Yet even though Ben, now 19, might be considered an adult, he's not sure he has fully achieved that status: He has to wait until his 21st birthday — in December 1998 — before he can legally purchase alcohol.

"People want you to act like an adult, but then they turn around and say you can't drink until you're 21," remarked Ben, a parishioner at St. Pius V Church in Cohocton.

Shannon Cooke also questions the logic behind some legal age restrictions. She pointed out that federal law allows you to enlist in the military without parental permission at 18, but that the legal drinking age in most states — including New York — stands at 21.

"I wonder about that. You can risk your life and die for your country at 18, but if you want to go out with your friends, legally you can't do that," said Shannon, 20, from St. Dominic's Church in Shortsville.

Shawn Surline, 16, sees a similar inconsistency involving his part-time job at a home-and-garden store. Although Shawn recently received his learner's permit and now drives frequently, state law prevents him from operating a forklift or other power equipment at work until he turns 18.

"Since we're able to drive cars, we should be able to use a forklift," said Shawn, from Holy Cross Church in Rochester.

For the most part, though, Shawn feels that sound reasoning produced age-related laws. This is especially true, he said, when alcohol is the issue at hand.

"Legally, there should be an age set because there are people who don't use (alcohol) responsibly," Shawn said.

"It sets a precedent that you should be mature enough to take on a responsibility like that," added Kerri Judkins, 20, from St. Lawrence Church in Greece.

Shawn reasoned that while people under 21 are more likely to drink and drive without considering the consequences, 21-year-olds may "stop and think, 'How am I going to get home?'"

Shawn feels that both alcohol and tobacco products should carry age restrictions because of their potential for inflicting long-term physical harm. He also says that current state laws, which set the minimum age for purchasing alcohol three years higher than for tobacco, make sense.

"Cigarettes don't affect your mind or anything. Alcohol messes with your mind, reflexes, everything," Shawn said.

Not too long ago, 18-year-olds could legally purchase tobacco products and alcohol. During the 1980s, the legal drinking age in New York rose from 18 to 19 and then to 21.

Shannon agreed with these decisions, noting that many alcohol-related car accidents occur around high-school graduation time. She added that many teens "act before they think," and therefore she would also approve of an increase in the minimum driving age.

"The things that went through my mind as a 16-year-old — why would you let a 16-year-old get behind the wheel of

a car? I'm a sophomore. I'm marked.

On the other hand, I think it's begun to change.

"You know, I'm around myself, I feel more responsible."

Ben Edwards also exercises his right. He believes the age of 18 didn't have a sufficient grasp of politics earlier in life.

"I don't think that before I was 18, you're interested in that much."

Ben said you start older, in working the "real" start to be aware of

Kerri Judkins depends on maturity, than age. For example, she turned 18 three months ago.

Upcoming Supplements

HEALTH

Publication Date: July 24 - Deadline: July 10

The Catholic Church's teaching on health-related issues stems from Scripture. This special supplement will offer readers a unique perspective on those issues while offering valuable information on modern health-care programs.

EDUCATION

Publication Date: August 14 - Deadline: July 31

The Rochester Diocese has made lifelong Christian education its top priority. Thus, as schools and students gear up for the first day of school, the Courier will make its annual study of trends, developments and issues in education — from kindergarten to the continuing education of adults, from Catholic schools to religious education programs.

CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS

Publication Date: September 18 - Deadline: September 4

The Diocese of Rochester is home to numerous organizations for lay Catholics — from fraternal and service groups to spiritual and prayer leagues. This special section will provide an opportunity for such groups to inform Courier readers about their histories, purpose and membership opportunities.

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