

# The Messenger

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Volume 2007  
Issue 1 *The Messenger* 2007

Article 55

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2007

## Salem Infrared

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### Recommended Citation

Lonquest, Matthew (2007) "Salem Infrared," *The Messenger*: Vol. 2007 : Iss. 1 , Article 55.  
Available at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/messenger/vol2007/iss1/55>

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out of the ground like some new species of brown and green flower. A few yards away, underneath two gigantic white birches, someone's dug a circular fire pit that's about three or four feet wide and a foot deep. The logs and broken pieces of glass look like pretty recent additions to the heaps of trash. People probably come here to get fucked up every night.

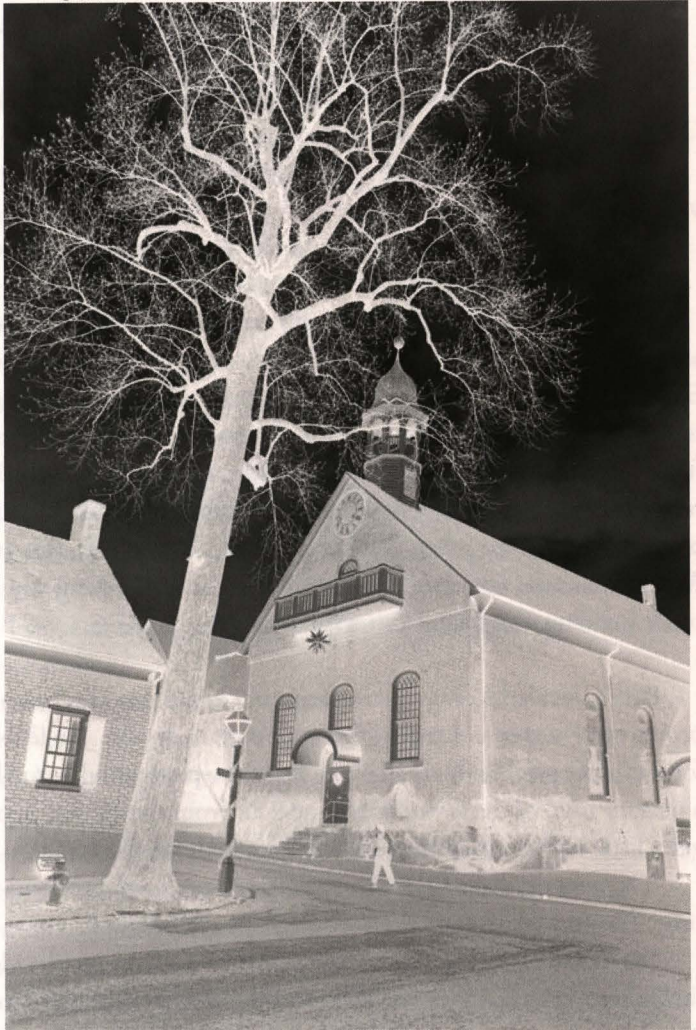
Billy is already puffing away at his joint. After his second long drag, he stops, holds his creation up in front of his face and rotates it between his fingers, inspecting it for any imperfections. Apparently he's satisfied with his work because he takes an even longer drag and nods approvingly. He blows out a thick cloud of smoke and holds the joint out towards me.

"Andrew, take a hit, man—it won't kill you."

"It's not that I don't want to, I just don't think I can. They randomly drug test us at work, and weed stays in your system longer than anything. You know that. You did go to college."

"Listen, if you only take one or two hits, you'll be clean by tomorrow. I know how this stuff works, and come on, I'm offering you free pot and we're at the rope swing. That's got to count for something."

I know I shouldn't smoke, but for some reason I don't want Billy to think I'm still paranoid about cops coming. I grab the joint



*Matthew Lonnguest—*

*Salem Infrared*

from him and press it to my lips, telling myself not to suck in too hard. Of course, I do, and as I'm bent over coughing and trying not to puke up a lung, Billy sits on the bench, feet in the air, cracking up. I can't talk, so I just lift up my middle finger and keep