

Smoke

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HOW TO CITE: Bronson R. Smoke. *Fam Med.* 2025;57(7):519–519.
doi: [10.22454/FamMed.2025.224652](https://doi.org/10.22454/FamMed.2025.224652)

PUBLISHED: 27 June 2025

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The fragrant smell of Bond Street,
and I am twelve once again,
in the front seat of his car.
Pipe in his mouth, held at a rakish angle,
his Homburg between us,
he puffed away
as we cruised Gun Hill Road,
Pelham Parkway, Bruckner Boulevard—
the patchwork quilt that was his Bronx.

Alone with my father that Sunday,
brother, mother absent,
we drove from place to place
on house call rounds,
to German, Jewish, Irish immigrant families,
where I waited in the car, double-parked.

He came from such a home,
first in his family to go to college,
his blue-collar dad from Belarus,
mother who spoke broken English.

Then down the Grand Concourse
we went, sitting in silence, side by side,
radio tuned to WOR,
while Carlton Fredericks told us
Living Should Be Fun.

DEDICATION

The author dedicates this poem to his father.