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## After 44 Years, Waldos Rediscover Mythical Pot Planter

**MARNIE SCHLEICHER** on April 7, 2016 at 5:30 pm

*This story has been corrected.*

**By Chris Roberts |**

The legend of 420 begins in Marin County, with a real-life story worthy of *The Goonies*: A gang of stoned teenaged goofballs are gifted a treasure map, where X marks the spot of an unguarded patch of marijuana.

Abandoned by the Coast Guardsman assigned to the lighthouse at Point Reyes Station who planted it, the patch of green gold is just ready and waiting for an intrepid explorer to find it and harvest it.

Searching for this mythical cannabis plantation became an obsession for a handful of San Rafael High students who called themselves the Waldos, who gathered at a statute of Louis Pasteur on campus grounds before heading out to search each afternoon in 1971.

They never did find it, but their arranged time to assemble – 4:20 p.m. – became international code for marijuana use, after the slang gradually made its way onto the Grateful Dead tour via Marin County osmosis (friends-of-friends, all in bands) and into the stoner lexicon forever.

But what about that treasure map, long lost, whose veracity was often questioned? Turns out it was real – as was the Coast Guard member, who the Waldos just recently rediscovered.

It took six years, numerous twists and turns, dead-ends, missed meetings, hang-ups, a private investigator, and many trips to homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and even a Denny's in San Jose.

But on Super Bowl weekend, they found him: His name is Gary Newman, and he'd been living under a bridge in San Jose.

To get to the reunion – the Waldos put Gary up in a motel for a weekend, and interviewed him on video about 420, his time in the Coast Guard, and how the man who sparked international slang for marijuana ended up homeless four decades later – the Waldos called everyone and anyone who popped up on numerous records and database searches.

The search was always going to be hard: Bill McNulty, the friend who passed the Waldos the map, died in the 1980s. Through constant calls to their friend's brother, they got a name: Gary Newman. But no actual spelling, and no confirmation that such a Coast Guardsman ever actually existed.

While looking for their late friend's brother, they managed to stumble upon a woman, his half-sister who had been married to the Coast Guardsman. Yes, he had been stationed at Pt. Reyes. Yes, he knew Bill. No, she had no idea where he might be – and she wanted nothing to do with anything cannabis-related.

More years of searching ensue. Professional sleuths are no help, the government refuses to share any records. The Waldos are getting older – in their sixties, thinking more about the other side. Meanwhile, 420's biggest missing piece was still out there. It looks like the Coast Guardsman may never be found.

Called again out of desperation, the sister reveals Gary used to live in San Jose. That at least centers the search. But only after more cajoling, searching, visits to caregivers and repeated letters to a P.O. Box the Waldos correctly guess is connected to Gary is he found – and even then, another private investigator is needed to literally find and get him from the bridge he's living under.

And there's a final twist. The Waldos put Gary up in a motel for a few days to talk to him. When Waldo Steve asked for the bill, the motel operator said – including tax – it would be exactly \$420.

*Editor's note: Reports of a Waldo passing on in 2014 were greatly exaggerated. The Waldos inform SF Evergreen they are all alive and well. SF Evergreen regrets the error and celebrates the truth.*

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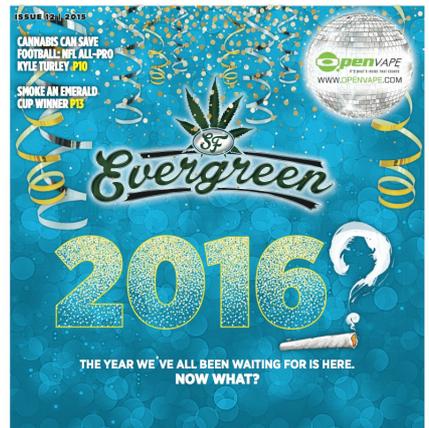
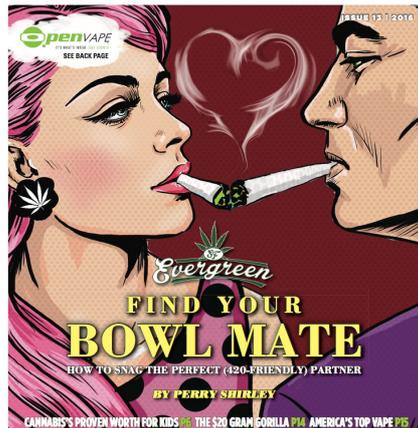
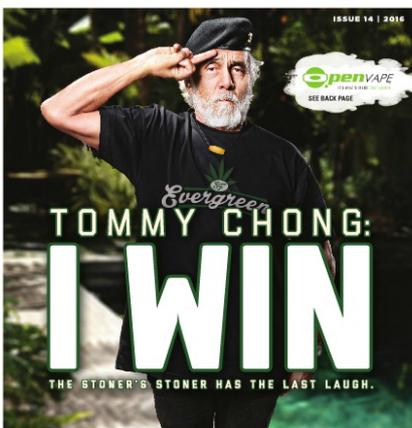
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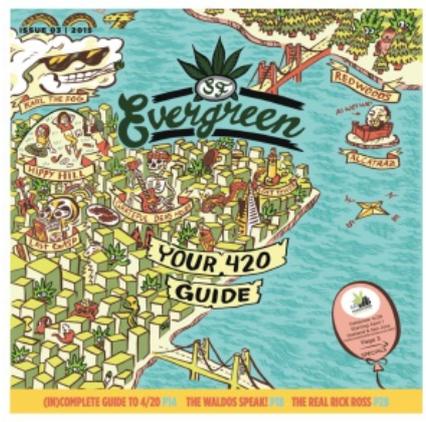
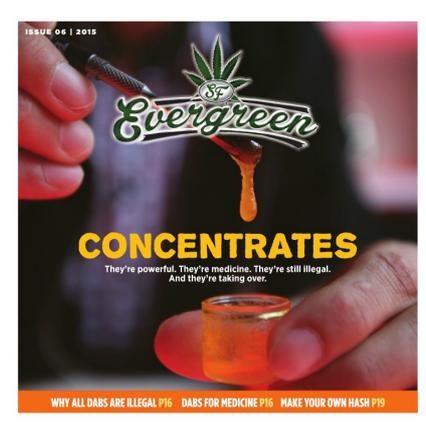
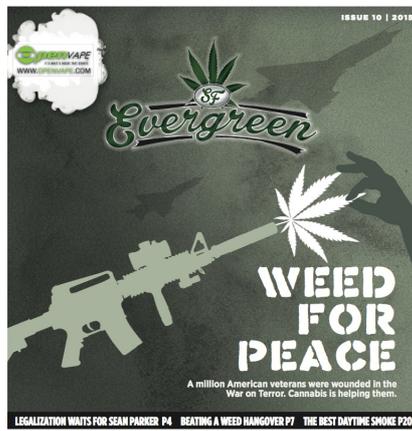
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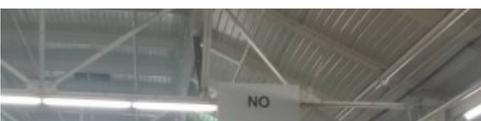
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