

420 Meaning: The Very Old Beginning Of Marijuana's Global Holiday

B J Y O E L C O W A R E R
 0 4 / 1 9 / 6 A T 4 : 1 8 P M

The numbers “420” have become synonymous with marijuana consumption. On Wednesday, all over the world, from the Canadian Yukon to South Africa, folks will light up in honor of 4/20, the unofficial cannabis holiday. Marijuana aficionados have a tendency to get high at 4:20 p.m., and, among the truly adventurous, at 4:20 a.m. People (wrongly) believe all the clocks are set to 4:20 in the film “Pulp Fiction” in honor of cannabis, and it is no coincidence that one of California’s major medical marijuana bills was named Senate Bill 420.

So what’s with these three numbers? Why have they become intertwined with getting high? Some people say it’s because 420 is the police radio code in some jurisdictions for marijuana consumption, while others say it’s a Talmudic numerical extraction from the Bob Dylan song “Rainy Day Women #12 and 35.” But these and many other theories are incorrect; the true 420 origin story is far stranger.



Fast Eddy Aki’a of Hawaii smokes a joint as thousands gather to celebrate 4/20 in Denver’s Civic Center Park, April 20, 2012.

P H O T O : M A R C P I S C O T T Y /

The tale starts 45 years ago in San Rafael, California, and involves a group of five high-spirited high school students who called themselves the Waldos because they, well, tended to goof around and chill out by a particular wall on campus. The young merry pranksters liked to go on what they called “safaris” — visiting with the researchers developing the first holograms in what is now known as Silicon Valley, climbing onto the girders beneath the Golden Gate bridge and bouncing around on the safety nets like they were trampolines. But none of their excursions compared to the adventure that began one fall day in 1971 when an acquaintance handed them a hand-drawn treasure map, one that apparently led to an abandoned marijuana grow on the nearby Point Reyes Peninsula.

“When you are in high school and you have no money and there is free weed, you go for it,” said David Reddix, one of the Waldos, in a recent phone interview. “Like kids today thinking about candy, all we could think about was that candy out there on the coast.” The brother-in-law of a friend had apparently been tending a small patch of cannabis on federal land out there, but since he was in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, he’d become nervous he was going to get caught. So he was offering the plants up to anyone who could use the map he’d drawn to find them. Sensing opportunity, the five Waldos came up with a plan: They’d meet at 4:20 every afternoon at their school’s Louis Pasteur statue, smoke a joint, and then head out to the coast in search of the treasure. Their vehicle of choice? A ’66 Chevy Impala with New Riders of the Purple Sage and Santana blasting on the 8-track stereo nicknamed the Safari Mobile.



The Waldos’ Safari Mobile, in 1970s Marin County, California.

P H O T O : 4 2 0 W A L D O S . C O M

The treasure hunt yielded new experiences, like the time two single file lines of cows followed the smoked-filled Impala across some ranchland they were exploring. (“We were stoned, and we thought it was a miracle,” said Steve Capper, one of the Waldos.) But after several weeks of searching, the marijuana plot was never found. So the Waldos gave up the treasure hunt, but not the 4:20 smoke breaks. In the school hallways, they would signal about the meetings by saying “4:20 Louie” and then just “4:20” to each other. “It was code,” said Capper. “Our coaches, our teachers, our parents, nobody knew what we were talking about.” That made sense, since the father of one of the Waldos was apparently head of narcotics enforcement at the San Francisco Police

Department.



The original "420" flag, made by a friend of the Waldos in her high school art class.

P H O T O : 4 2 0 W A L D O S . C O M

The teenage high jinks might have faded away for good, if the tradition hadn't worked its way into the Grateful Dead scene that was centered in San Rafael and spreading across the country. Soon the Waldos noticed "420" carved into park benches and spray-painted on walls. Then Steven Hager, editor of High Times magazine, latched onto the concept. "At the 1993 or 1994 High Times Cannabis Cup, Steven woke everyone up at 4:20 a.m., made us all sit in a massive drum circle and had everyone get high," remembered Allen St. Pierre, executive director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML).

In 1995, marijuana activists staged cannabis rallies on 4/20 in Vancouver and San Francisco, events that these days draw tens of thousands of attendees. Now 420 has even entered mainstream culture: General Mills recently plastered Denver billboards and bus ads with Totino's Pizza Rolls promotions featuring slogans like "Stock Up B4/20."

"I thought it was pretty funny," said Reddix. "What started out a little funny joke, a secret code, turned into a worldwide phenomenon."

That phenomenon appears to be getting bigger every year. "I think what we are seeing a huge transition of 4/20 from a protest event to a kind of cultural celebration," said Vivian McPeak, executive director of the annual Seattle Hempfest, which takes place each August. "I believe that in the future we will see 4/20 as a global international day of celebration and reverence for cannabis and contemplation of the global failures of prohibition as a policy."

For years, the Waldos stayed away from the big 4/20 events and avoided much self-promotion. After all, they had regular jobs to maintain and kids to raise. But that's starting to change.

The five have launched a colorful website, 420waldos.com, that details their adventures and lists what they say is undeniable proof that they coined "420," such as a postmarked 1970s letter one of them sent that included a

joint and the line, “A little 420 enclosed for your weekend.” There’s also a photo of a 420 flag a friend of theirs made in a high school art class. And after six years of searching that included hiring a private investigator, the Waldos say they’ve now tracked down Gary Newman, the Coast Guardsman whose map launched the 420 phenomenon in the first place.



The Waldos in 2016: From left to right, Waldo Mark Gravitch, Waldo Steve Capper, Waldo Dave Reddix, Coast Guardsman Gary Newman, Waldo Larry Schwartz and Waldo Jeff Noel.

P H O T O : 4 2 0 W A L D O S . C O M

The Waldos have formed a limited liability company, have their tax documents in order and are making connections within the growing marijuana industry. Aside from some branded apparel, the five aren’t saying yet what their business ventures will entail — but whatever it is, it will likely be as big and strange and fun as the marijuana-fueled safari that started it all. “We have never made a penny,” said Capper. “But now we are open for business.”

Sponsored Topics

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Dental Implants for Seniors | > | 5 | Prostate Cancer Signs | > |
| 2 | Early Signs of Migraine Attack | > | 6 | 10 Vitamins for Arthritis Pain | > |
| 3 | Reverse Mortgage Calculator | > | 7 | Best Multivitamin Supplements | > |
| 4 | Colon Cancer Signs | > | 8 | Best Cars to Buy | > |

Promoted Links

Ads by Revcontent





Diabetes Breakthrough That Will Bankrupt Diabetes Industry
The ICTM



How To Handle Finances As A Newlywed
Forbes



Keep Trump Out Of The White House
Hillary Clinton



Why So Many Guys are Loving This Razor
Harry's



New Unauthorized Video Could Force Hillary to Give Up Her White House Dreams
Health Sciences Institute



'Billions' Fans, 5 Real-Life Hedge Fund Industry Power Players
Bankrate



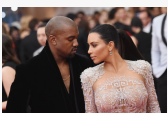
New Rule In Local Area
Better Finances



Grandma's Method: Eye Bag & Wrinkle 'Removal' Trick
FitMm

Popular Topics

P
O
W
E
R
R
O
N
D
E
B
Y





A D V E R T I S E M E N T

Related Stories



The Rise Of Tailor-Made Highs

B J Y O E L W A R N E R

Marijuana companies are promising custom-made experiences based on flavor compounds called terpenes. But can they actually deliver “contentment” and “relaxation”?



High Times At Rusty Shovel Ranch

B J Y O E L W A R N E R

Marijuana farmers in California’s fabled Emerald Triangle are ready to go legit. Will it be enough for them to survive?

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

Join the Discussion

3 Comments

Sort by **Newest** ▾

Add a comment...



Samual Dav ·

Owner at Self Employed (Business)

call: +1(918) 340 2604

delivery service ; (971) 220-7042

Email: eddymorgan34@gmail.com

Are you depressed, suffering from cancer, glaucoma, headache, insomnia, joint pains, multiply sclerosis, muscle crams, nausea, etc and need the best strains of medical marijuana to help ease your pain?? why not try out our wide range of products today? we are a team of dedicated farmers specialized at growing the best strains of medical marijuana and cannabis oil containing the THC,CBN and CBD active ingredients. our main dispensary... [See More](#)

Like · Reply · Apr 23, 2016 3:59pm



Bela Pereira

●—————⚠️ GIVE IT A FEW MINUTES⚠️—————●

I don't usually buy into this sort of stuff, but it feels so REAL!

...You know, I'm really starting to believe the tagline: ⚡ Your Name is No Accident ⚡!

This report actually showed me things about myself that I hadn't had confidence in before...

If you are looking for answers:

👍 Maybe you're looking for a career change...

👍 Or maybe you'd like to know how to attract more wealth and abundance...

👍 Or (like many of us) you're on a mission to find your life's purpose...

👉 GET your Personalized (and FREE) Numerology Reading here👉

👉👉 <https://www.facebook.com/Free-2016.../app/208195102528120/> 👈👈

Like · Reply · Apr 20, 2016 11:55am



Arlo Sanders ·

The Groundlings Theater

At first I didn't believe that those guys coined the term 420, but after looking at that picture I've become convinced. Gary Newman looks like a rock star.

Maybe this is tacky to post here, but you guys should check out this video that was made specifically for the bong toking hippy holiday: <https://youtu.be/XU0huRnLq4Q>

Like · Reply · Apr 19, 2016 1:55pm



Joe Romeo ·

Works at 1ST Team Staffing Services, Inc.

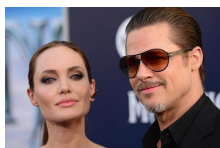
Of course a typical stoner wouldn't believe the real story. They'd rather make up their own and tell their friends someone in their own family coined the term back in the 70's.

Like · Reply · Apr 20, 2016 2:50pm

Facebook Comments Plugin

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

Top Stories



**Angelina Jolie-
Brad Pitt
Divorce: Actor**



**What Is Chyna's
Cause Of
Death? Former**



**LeBron James
Caught
Cheating On**



**Who Gets
Prince's
Money? After**



**Why Is Michael
Strahan Leaving
'Live With Kelly**



**'Criminal Minds'
Star Shemar
Moore**



**Oracle Corp.
(ORCL) To Tap
US Utility**

P R E V E W E R O N T E B Y

**Stay connected to the
biggest stories unfolding
in technology.**

The IBTech Newsletter keeps you
connected to the biggest stories
unfolding in technology.

Email Address

S U B S

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

Recommended



What Is Chyna's Cause Of Death? Former



'Big Bang Theory' Star Kaley Cuoco



How The Porn Industry Plans To Convince



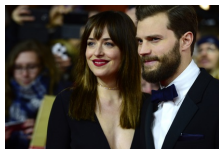
Angelina Jolie-Brad Pitt Divorce Rumors



Lindsay Lohan Announces She's Running



US Fighter Jets Scramble After Russian



'Fifty Shades Darker' Movie Stars Spotted



What Is Buy Nothing Day 2015? Facts

P R O W E R O E N D E B N Y T

B U S I N E S S

What To Look For In Tesla's Earnings Report

The automaker's CEO Elon Musk will likely address the latest tally of Model 3 pre-orders and problems with the Model X utility vehicle.

T E C H N O L O G Y

Meet The Largest Mobile Games Market In The World

Much as in the United States, light and casual games are a hit in China, but some developers are moving into heavier fare.

W O R L D

Zimbabwe Selling Its Wildlife

The drought-racked southern African nation put its wild animals up for sale Tuesday in a bid to ease financial pressure on its national parks.

N A T I O N A L

Conservative Men Spending Time In Target Women's Bathrooms

Men are going into women's bathrooms in Target to protest a policy that allows transgender individuals to use the restroom that corresponds with their gender identity.



© Copyright 2016 IBT Media Inc.
All Rights Reserved.

IBT

- [About Us](#)
- [Advertise with Us](#)
- [Media Kit](#)
- [Terms of Service](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)

Editions

- [Australia](#)
- [China](#)
- [India](#)

Italy
Japan
Singapore
United Kingdom
United States