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The Secret History of 420 (And 4/20. And 4:20.)

Not that a man should really be participating in "Weed Day," but still: a semi-investigative report.

By Answer Fella

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Krista Kennell/Sipa Press via Newscom

Everybody knows that 4:20 is the time to smoke pot. And everybody knows that 4/20 is the international pot-smoking day. But nobody I've talked to, not even the oldest and most ardent pot smokers, knows why or how 420 became linked to pot smoking.

Odigsdigg

Huh? 420? Like, did it ever cross your mind that maybe those old ardent potheads *forgot*? And "ardent" — where'd you come up with that one? "ardent" — you know, if you keep repeating it, it sounds funny as hell. Ardent. Our dent. Hardbent. Same with "nondominant arm": Say that five times and you won't even remember what you were talking about.

You know who knows? Larry "Ratso" Sloman, author of *Reefer Madness: A History of Marijuana*. But it's a really long story, man. It's *soooooo* long. It starts with some high school kids in San Rafael, California, back in 1971. Seriously, man. Ask Sloman — he says it started as 420 Louis, meaning "at 4:20 [they'd] meet by the Louis Pasteur statue outside the high school" and get high.

From there, this group of kids — "they called themselves 'Waldos,' " Sloman says — started getting high with the Grateful Dead at their rehearsal studio in San Rafael. Around 1990, *High Times* magazine senior editor Steve Bloom saw a flyer at a Dead concert that "told the story of 420, and that was news to me."

That was Steve Bloom saying that last thing, man. But the story on the flyer — about how "420" was California police code for smoking pot — was horseshit, man. Bloom says "after about five years," the Waldos story emerged.

"A few of these Waldos" — um, this is Sloman talking again now — "surfaced and contacted *High Times* to set the record straight in 1997." Which is "about five years" if you're baked. So it checks out. Thanks for asking, man. About the **pit-bull attack**, too. Such a gritty question, man. Nondominantarm nondominantarm nondominantarm nondominantarm.

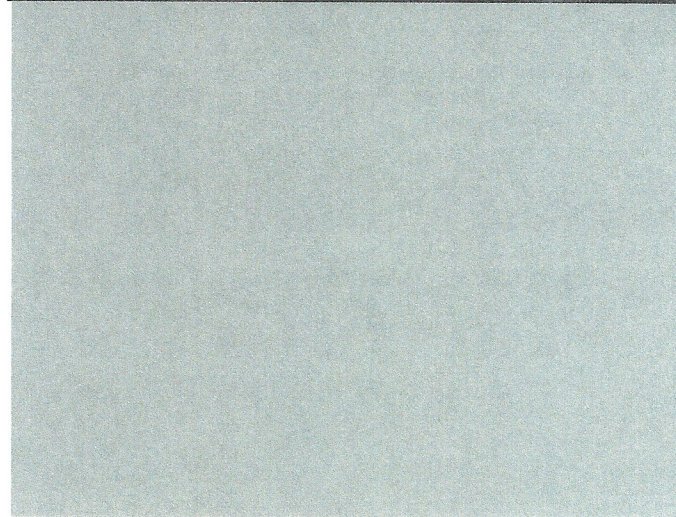
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