

THE RIDDLE OF 4:20

Deadheads thought they flipped the script on a California police code, but 4:20's origins are much simpler than that.

by Steve Bloom

Deadheads remember it well. A flyer that told the story of 4:20. It circulated on Dead tour for several years starting in 1990.

"It reached thousands and thousands of people," Cannabis Action Network director Debby Goldsberry reminisces. "It's Xeroxed folklore."

The flyer in question exhorted Deadheads to SMOKE POT AT 4:20 and to WAKE 'N' BAKE as well. The typewritten text began: "420 started in San Rafael, CA around the late 1970s. It started as the police code for Marijuana Smoking in Progress. After San Rafael High School students heard of the police call, they started to use the expression 420 when referring to pot—'Let's go 420 dude.'"

An underground phenomenon was born. I brought back the flyer from my visit to the Grateful Dead shows in Oakland, CA during New Year's week in 1990, and we published it in the May '91 issue under the erroneous heading "WAKE 'N' BAKE!" The illustration pictured a stoner in bed surrounded by clocks and a calendar set at 4/20.

That was the official 4:20 story until Steve Waldo contacted HIGH TIMES editor-in-chief Steven Hager in 1998. He claimed that he and his friends, dubbed "the Waldos," coined the term in the early '70s when they were students at San Rafael High School. They would get out of school at 3:10 and meet 70 minutes later at the Louis Pasteur statue near the entrance of the school parking lot. "We reminded each other about the meeting during the day," Waldo Steve told Hager in the Dec. '98 article, "by saluting each other in the halls and saying, '420 Louie.'"

They convened at the statue after school to smoke pot. "We did discover that we could talk about getting high in front of our parents without them knowing by using the phrase 420," Waldo Steve recalled.

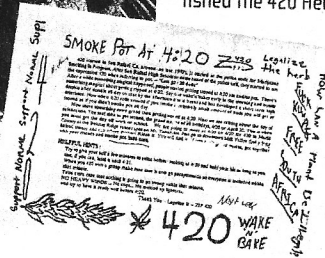
The term had been a product of the Waldos' stoned imagination until it leaked into the Deadhead lexicon two decades later. It made sense. The Dead had long been based out of San Rafael. It's entirely possible that the flyer's unknown author attended the same high school as the Waldos, just years later. The term was passed on like a game of telephone. Finally, in 1990, 4:20 went public. However, it remains unclear how 4:20 evolved from a simple high-school saying to an



The 4:20 Snack Shop in Negril.

BRIAN JAHN

The original 4:20 flyer.



alleged police code. On several occasions, HIGH TIMES has reported that there has never been any such code.

The police-code story became a Deadhead rumor, traveling far and wide. "Who are those people who made that flyer?" Goldsberry wonders. So do we.

As no one has challenged the Waldos' assertion, this establishes it as fact and certifies them as the founders of 4:20. Even so, Goldsberry still likes the flyer's premise. "It's pot-smoking in progress—4:20 or anytime," she says. "It was part of the pot rebellion of the early '90s. The Waldos felt the same rebellion when they did it. It's our power time."

Following the flyer's proclamation that 4/20 or April 20 is the "grand master of all holidays," Goldsberry established the 420 Hemp Festival in San Francisco five years ago. This year's event at Maritime Hall will feature dozens of bands on four stages, the Hempseed Cafe and 30 vendors, all starting at 4:20 PM and going for 12 hours. "It's the 420 marathon," she says.

The festival kicks off CAN's Cannithon, which will continue for two weeks until the Marijuana March in San Francisco on May 5. Whether we understand its cosmic significance, or even agree on its correct origin, 420 has become another reason to extol the virtues of marijuana and challenge the folly of prohibition. For that we can thank the Waldos and a little flyer that changed the world. ✨

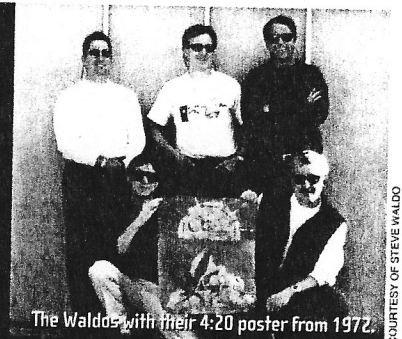
In 1971, the Waldos all lived and went to school in San Rafael, California. The Grateful Dead and New Riders of the Purple Sage were basically a consolidated San Rafael-based organization. Waldo Mark's father was a local real-estate broker who found the Dead places to rehearse and also found band members their homes in the Marin County hills. A hip dad—over 60 years old at the time—he always took the Waldos to Grateful Dead-New Riders shows (on the backstage guest list).

Around the Dead family, the Waldos always referred to getting high by their Waldo code, "420." Waldo Dave's brother managed Dead bassist Phil Lesh's side band, Too Loose ta Truck. In a 1975-postmarked letter, Waldo Dave refers to "420," mentions that his older brother was managing the band and writes of working at a show with his brother (and smoking out with Lesh and David Crosby). Waldo Dave always used the term "420" around the Dead community in that era.

An additional transfer into the Deadhead community a few years later may have come from Olde 420 brand beer. Also labeled as Deadhead Draft, it was made by Deadheads and the label had a lot of wording about the Grateful Dead. When I ran into Phil Lesh, he told me that the Grateful Dead organization had nothing to do with the production of Deadhead Draft Olde 420 beer, and that he never really knew the origin of 420.

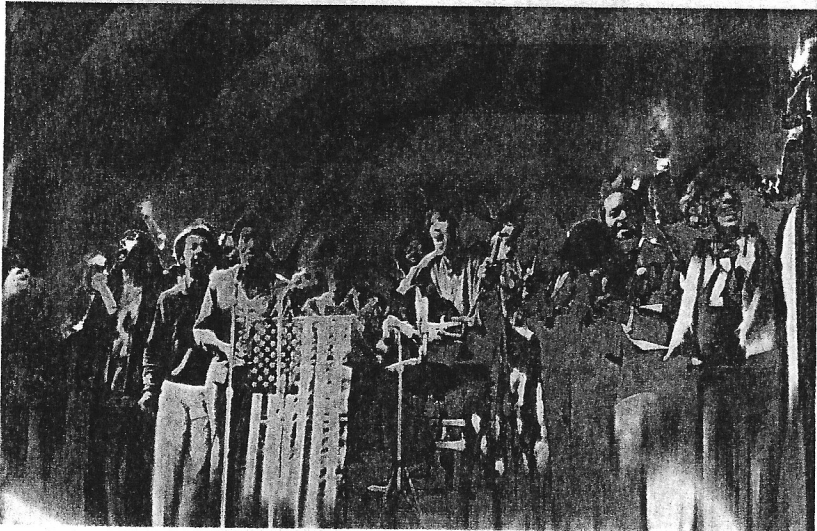
Although it has often been rumored, 420 is *not* a police code for drug-law enforcement. Drug enforcement in California, and in San Rafael, is part of the state Health and Safety Code, in which all sections have five- and six-digit numbers, sometimes separated by a decimal point. Pot-related activities and violations fall in the middle 11300s. For example, possession of marijuana is 11357 HS, marijuana for sale is 11359 HS and transporting marijuana is 11360 HS. [Proposition 215, legalizing medical-marijuana use in California, is 11362.5—Ed.]

There is no special code for marijuana use in progress. In the city of San Rafael, there are no municipal provisions, violations, infractions or codes relating to marijuana or other drugs. —Steve Waldo



The Waldos with their 4:20 poster from 1972.

COURTESY OF STEVE WALDO



SLICK STEVENS

420 FOREVER

Started by the Waldos of San Rafael High School in California in 1972, 420 has become a symbol of how the counterculture adapts to oppression. In much the same way that early Christians used the symbol of a fish to communicate with each other while being oppressed by the Roman Empire, 420 has become the secret stoner code used to communicate with members of the counterculture. Although the number holds no significance for the straight world, stoners have universally embraced it, to the point where April 20th has become our New Year celebration. This year, we'll be celebrating the first 420 of a new millennium. We hope this issue contributes to making this 420 the biggest and best in history.

Unfortunately, there's a dark side to 420, and we've made no attempt to hide it. From Columbine to Waco, we wanted to explore all aspects of 420 in this special collectors' issue.

We included the bad as well as the good because there are important lessons to be learned from Columbine and Waco. In the first case, a teenager on Luvox went on a murderous spree, killing people because they confessed to believing in God. In the second, the government targeted a collection of Bible students because they speculated in arms sales. Tragedies like Columbine and Waco are the result of a mainstream culture spiraling out of balance.

The counterculture will not produce tragedies like Columbine and Waco. Why? Because we reject guns, violence and synthetic mind-altering substances. And mostly because we don't conduct jihads against cultures we don't agree with.

What does 420 mean to you? Write and tell us and we'll try to include your perspective in our next 420 special issue.

Have a great 420.

Steven Hager
Editor-in-Chief

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF STEVEN HAGER

EXECUTIVE EDITOR DAN SKYE

SENIOR EDITORS STEVE BLOOM, STEVEN WISHNIA

CULTIVATION EDITOR CHRIS SIMUNEK

MANAGING EDITOR ZENA TSARFIN

NEWS EDITOR DEAN LATIMER

CULTIVATION REPORTER KYLE KUSHMAN

POT STAR CHRIS EUDALEY

ASSISTANT EDITOR GREG CASSEUS

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS BOBBY BLACK, JORGE CERVANTES, CHEF RA, GREGORY DAURER, MANIC DIESEL, STACY FINE, CHESLEY HICKS, RA JAMES, PAUL KRASSNER, KEN KRAYESKE, JESSICA LOOS, CARLO MCCORMICK, PRESTON PEET, CREE MCCREE, POPE WEASEL, BILL WEINBERG

ART DIRECTOR FRANK MAX

ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR ROBERT C. BRASWELL

ASSOCIATE DESIGNER DEVIN HORWITZ

ART & PRODUCTION NEEVY HADAR

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS MR. BHINDHI, COSMO, JOE PRO, DON SARTAIN, ANTHONY ZITO

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS BILLY BATZ, BILL BRIDGES, GREEN BROS., ANDRE GROSSMANN, BRIAN JAHN, NYPO, BORIS RAISHEVICH, STICK E. ROKEN

PUBLISHER JIM SKI

EDITORIAL/MARKETING DIRECTOR MIKE EDISON

CIRCULATION CONSULTANT MARY DE LA OSA

CONTROLLER SHEILA AVON

MULTIMEDIA DESIGNER SHAUN MACKEY

SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR JOE DAUZ

INTERNET MANAGING EDITOR KEITH CHONG

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR RICHARD CUSIC

SENIOR ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVE MICHAEL CZERHONIAK

ACCOUNT MANAGER MERILEE KUJCHON

PRODUCT MANAGER NICOLE SALOTTI

NATIONAL ADVERTISING OFFICE 235 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, 5TH FL. NEW YORK, NY 10003 [212] 397-0500

FOUNDING PUBLISHER/EDITOR THOMAS KING FORCADE, 1945-1978

HIGH TIMES, MAY 2001 NO. 309 (ISSN #0362-630X), PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY TRANS-HIGH CORPORATION, 235 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, 5TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10003 • HIGH TIMES AND TRANS-HIGH CORPORATION ASSUME NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY CLAIMS OR REPRESENTATIONS CONTAINED IN THIS MAGAZINE OR IN ANY ADVERTISEMENT NOR DO THEY ENCOURAGE THE ILLEGAL USE OF ANY OF THE PRODUCTS ADVERTISED WITHIN • MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS (PAYABLE IN US FUNDS) AND CHANGES OF ADDRESS (PLEASE INCLUDE MOST RECENT MAILING LABEL) TO PO BOX 410, MT. MORRIS, IL 61054 • SUBSCRIPTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES: 12 ISSUES FOR \$29.99, 24 ISSUES FOR \$54.99 • SINGLE COPY PRICE: \$4.99 • IN CANADA: 12 ISSUES FOR \$38.99, 24 ISSUES FOR \$70.89 • ALL OTHER COUNTRIES BY SURFACE MAIL: 12 ISSUES FOR \$42.99 • ALL OTHER COUNTRIES BY AIRMAIL: \$68.95 • OFFICES AT 235 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, NY 10003 • PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, NY, AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES • MANUSCRIPTS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE • ALL CONTRIBUTIONS WILL BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED, BUT THE PUBLISHERS AND EDITORS ASSUME NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOSS OR INJURY TO UNSOLICITED MATERIAL • COPYRIGHT © 2000 BY TRANS-HIGH CORPORATION. NOTHING IN THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE REPRODUCED IN ANY MANNER, EITHER IN WHOLE OR IN PART, WITHOUT SPECIFIC WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. "HIGH TIMES" AND "HIGH LIFE" ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF TRANS-HIGH CORP. ALL ADVERTISING AND ADVERTISED PRODUCTS VOID WHERE PROHIBITED. POSTMASTER: PLEASE SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO HIGH TIMES, PO BOX 410, MT. MORRIS, IL 61054.

FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS IN THE US CALL: (800) 827-0228
OR GO TO WWW.HIGHTIMES.COM

PRINTED IN THE USA