

*Cheech &
Chong's*

ALMOST LEGAL

 BOOK FOR 

STONERS

The 420 Story

The legend dates back to 1971, when a small group of friends who were students at San Rafael High School in California—each of them one part athlete, one part stoner—began to meet every afternoon after they finished practice for their various sports. They would meet near a wall outside school, and started calling themselves the “Waldos” in honor of the wall. The friends’ purpose each afternoon was to head out into the Point Reyes forest to find a hidden crop of marijuana plants that was supposedly abandoned by its owner. And to get stoned.

In the beginning, they gave each other reminders throughout the day about the meeting time—4:20 p.m. Soon they started using the number “420” (“four-twenty”) to stand for the act of smoking weed at any time of day, and then the number became a synonym for weed itself.

So how did the term spread from a circle of five high school students in San Rafael, California, to the entire planet’s circle of stoners?

Deadheads, of course.

As it turns out, two of the five friends had a direct connection to the Grateful Dead. Mark Gravitch’s father handled real estate for some of the Dead. And Dave Reddix’s brother Patrick was musical friends with Dead bassist Phil Lesh. Because of these connections, the Waldos were invited to many Dead parties, rehearsals, and other insider gatherings. They naturally used the 420 term among themselves when passing joints around, and it must have caught on among the Dead and their friends and roadies, and from there, it spread to Deadheads across the planet.

Eventually *High Times* magazine got wind of the term, and started planning events based on 4/20 each year, like the World Hemp Expo

Extravaganza and the Cannabis Cup. In the early ’90s, *High Times* secured the web domain 420.com, and the magazine’s overall reach and influence made the term—and the date, and the time—an international connecting point for all stoners.

By 1998, the original Waldos had become very aware that their personal little code word had become a worldwide cannabis-culture phenomenon, and decided to tell the whole story. They contacted *High Times* magazine, and then editor Steve Hager flew to San Rafael to meet the group. After seeing the evidence—including a handmade flag with “420” on it and letters postmarked in 1971 filled with 420 references—Hager was convinced.

Today, the original 420 friends—also including Steve Capper and Patty Young—are famous and proud of their impact on cannabis culture, although none of them smokes grass like they used to.

No matter, there are millions of people who gladly take the mantle for them—every day at 4:20 p.m., and every April 20.



EVERY HOUR, IT'S 4:20 SOMEWHERE

The Legend of 420

Every day, lots of people get together with friends to smoke weed at 4:20 p.m. And every year there are parties and festivals around the world on 4/20 (April 20) where stoners celebrate their shared love of marijuana.

The number gets referenced all over pop culture—like in the movie *Pulp Fiction*, where every clock visible in the movie is set to 4:20; and on the TV show *The Price Is Right*, where a number of stoner contestants over the years have repeatedly (and hilariously) guessed the price \$420 for every item up for bid.

The term 420 is used by stoners in lots of ways. To make connections in mixed company, “Are you 420-friendly?” To tell friends it’s time to get high, “Hey, it’s 420 time!” To ask if someone

has any pot on them, “Got any 420?”

But exactly why is the magic number 420 celebrated by stoners here, there, and everywhere? What does it mean, and where does it come from?

People used to say that 420 was California state police code for a marijuana bust. The fact is, that was a myth and has zero truth behind it. The real story has been around here and there, and was told in detail in the last few years.