

**WTE Column of Dec. 4, 2014. Editor's headline: "Hypocrites run drug war"**

When you have children and grandchildren in California, you wonder about "the evil weed." "It's everywhere among artists and musicians," my sons tell me, who teach the occasional college class for the music industry. "Sometimes students show up stoned." Today I know, one or the other of our three boys tried pot with high school and/or college friends, but with my husband an enthusiastic Reaganite, we didn't discuss it back then.

According to one California "potpreneur," the two major strains of marijuana are indica and sativa. Indica is for people who like to get stoned, but for those who need medical treatment, indica tends to induce depression and suicidal thoughts. Sativa, on the other hand, "kills pain and leaves the patient awake and aware and motivated instead of mellow." So says Big Kahuna, one of the subjects in Nicholas Schou's 2013 "The Weed Runners." Schou traces the ups and downs, the lawsuits and jail terms, of California's pot marketers, unscrupulous opportunists to dispensaries trying to stay within the law.

In 1991, Kenneth Jenks and spouse became the first AIDS patients to obtain marijuana from the US government under the Compassionate IND program. Jenks, a hemophiliac who had received a transfusion of tainted blood, had unknowingly infected his wife. When cannabis activists alerted a national AIDS conference to possible governmental marijuana treatment, President H. W. Bush abruptly terminated IND.

Eight patients, including one woman, receive(d) cannabis from Uncle Sam for life, in ailments ranging from seizures to glaucoma; all others make do with expensive synthetic drugs with often horrific side effects. In 2001, an independent team of scientists in Missoula, Montana, studied the four surviving IND patients with spectacularly positive results, confirming the efficacy of medial marihuana for certain chronic conditions.

Big Pharma loved it when, back on August 5, 1985, the Reagan Administration launched the largest anti-marijuana crackdown in American history. "Operation Delta-9" deployed 2,200 federal, state, and local law-enforcement agents in all fifty states. They ransacked homes and gardens, uprooted plants, confiscated owners' cash, wrecked lives. By then Reagan had long authorized CIA covert action in Nicaragua that supplied arms to guerrillas who financed their purchases with drug money obtained by sending cocaine into the US. Pilots who flew planes loaded with arms also flew the drug planes, writes Malcolm Byrne in his meticulously-researched 2014 "Iran-Contra: Reagan's Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power."

Reagan's CIA set out to destroy the Sandinista government just as Nixon's CIA had done in Chile where, on orders to make Chile's economy "scream," the CIA instigated a social upheaval that prompted revolution and the assassination of President Salvador Allende, a physician whose political career spanned forty years. In Nicaragua, Reagan authorized the CIA in spite of congressional attempts to prevent just such activity via the Boland Amendment.

The two presidents shared an obsession with “pinkos, hippies, student radicals, and black militants,” along with beliefs that the Evil Empire would overthrow governments around the world. To beat the Soviets to it, each empowered the CIA to destabilize left-leaning governments while ignoring CIA-enabled importation of hard drugs.

“Drugs and covert operations go together like fleas on a dog,” a former CIA analyst, David McCarmichael, is quoted in “Smoke Signals” (2012). Drug dealers were good guys if they “snorted the Communist line,” comments is author, Martin Lee. The feds waging a no-holds-barred war on marijuana while importing cocaine with its vastly more destructive effects amounted to “sheer hypocrisy.”

Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North supervised the illicit contra program along with CIA Director William Casey and Vice President George H. W. Bush. As early as 1982, “Casey took steps to shield the Contras from legal scrutiny,” writes Lee, adding that Costa Rica, which had been bullied into providing landing strips, banned for life Oliver North and three other top US officials “after that country found hard evidence of CIA complicity in cocaine trafficking” while identifying more than fifty “contras and contra-related entities” actively promoting the drug trade.

Meanwhile in Afghanistan another Reagan quagmire unfolded as mujahideen and their US-backed Pakistani benefactors “profited mightily from the opium trade.” Massive amounts of US aid created “a major arms-for-heroin pipeline,” as the CIA “essentially told the DEA (the Drug Enforcement Administration) to get lost for the duration of the war.” The rebels’ training and supplies for fighting a Soviet-backed Kabul regime cost American taxpayers \$3.2 billion, “the most expensive undertaking in CIA history” as culture warriors averted their eyes to “deadly ethical violations . . . while demonizing cannabis” at home. Reagan had vowed to cut government down to size but in office, he did just the opposite, granting the DEA unparalleled authority and funding. The behemoth’s disingenuous rhetoric will be examined in another commentary.