

This article originally ran September 4, 2012 in the Huffington Post.

What if everything you were ever told and believed about a subject wasn’t true? What if the well-meaning, trusted and respected people who told you those lies were just parroting the propaganda that they heard?

That’s the exact dilemma I found myself in about three years ago. For most of my life, I bought into the grim and terrifying stories I heard about -- dare I say it? -- marijuana.

Whether they called it doobie, reefer, pot, Mary Jane or plain ol’ weed, I believed all those ominous voices when they warned me that marijuana could cause everything from brain damage to a craving for stronger drugs (i.e., the “gateway” theory.) And so as I got older, I just kept repeating the same marijuana mantras to others, convinced that I was right. “Marijuana is dangerous,” I told others. “Only brain dead stoners use it.”

Someone once said to me, “the further you get away from the facts, the easier they can turn into a myth.” Boy, is that the truth. It all started three years ago when I decided to finally research marijuana. If anything, I was determined to prove to myself and others that my concerns were valid. Living in Colorado

where medical marijuana was legal to possess and grow once you qualified for a “red card”, I was surrounded by “pot shops.” Thanks to Amendment 20 in our State Constitution, these dispensaries grew and flourished faster than it takes a medical marijuana bud to mature. In Denver County alone, there are around 400 medical marijuana dispensaries, outnumbering the 375 Starbucks statewide. I freely admit that I mocked these businesses and rolled my eyes at the people who frequented them. So, on that summer day nearly three years ago, I decided to dig into this controversial plant and arm myself with even more information that would support my anti-marijuana stance.

But a strange thing kept happening. The more I dug into what some opponents refer to as “the green menace,” the more I continued to find research studies I wasn’t aware existed. Some of these studies had been buried -- perhaps purposely -- and made scientific claims about Cannabis Indica and Cannabis Sativa that I found almost too good to be true. For example, I read a 1974 study (published in 1975) that was conducted at Virginia Commonwealth University that proved that the cannabinoids in the cannabis plant shrunk cancerous tumors and killed cancer cells, leaving healthy cells alone.

Even though it was there in black and white, I still didn’t buy it. So I kept investigating. I found that when I used the Internet search terms “cannabis+indica+healing+benefits,” I got a whooping 220,000 websites. When I added the word “medical” to that group of words, the field increased to 452,000.

For the next six months, I spent every spare moment researching “the Devil Weed.” Putting it bluntly, I was shocked. There was absolutely nothing “devilish” about it. All this remarkable information had been out there, waiting to be discovered and all I had to do was agree to view it with an open mind. I learned that Cannabis Indica had been compounded into liquid extracts in the late 1800’s and up until the early 1900’s. These extracts were recommended by medical doctors to alleviate everything from teething pain in infants to reducing the pain of arthritis and menstrual cramps.

I found out that contrary to what I’d been told, nobody has ever died from using marijuana in the thousands of years this plant has been available. In fact, I had no idea that its medical use dated back to around 2700 B.C. and was called a “superior” herb by the Emperor Shen-Nung (2737-2697 B.C.). I discovered that while I had been demonizing marijuana, thousands of people worldwide had been quietly and effectively curing or relieving a multitude of health problems, including Crohn’s disease, migraine headaches, chronic depression, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), insomnia, dementia, epileptic seizures, Parkinson’s disease and even AIDS. The more I researched and talked to pro-cannabis physicians, patients, researchers and historians who studied the plant, the more I heard incredible testimonials of recovery from illnesses and mental imbalances in addition to, as one patient told me, “just a better outlook on life.”

And that’s when I uncovered information that really challenged the stories I’d been told. People were using this “weed” to get off of opiates, alcohol, tobacco, heroin, cocaine and other powerful drugs. Thus, it was gaining traction as “an exit drug,” instead of the “gateway drug.” Seniors were also secretly using it to improve their cognition. Wait...what? How is that possible? Didn’t marijuana make you a “brain-dead loser”? No, not according to the scientific data I discovered. The opposite was true as researchers found that the plant allowed neurogenesis in the brain -- the growth of new neural pathways, even when the brain had been damaged by age or trauma.

I understood that smoking the herb was the least effective way to gain the vast array of medical benefits from its use. I learned that doctors, lawyers, CEOs of major companies, accountants and other highly trained professionals used marijuana daily and felt it vastly improved their wellbeing and ability to handle stress. I found out that a respected medical doctor, Dr. William Courtney, encouraged patients with chronic illnesses to juice 10 to 20

fresh marijuana leaves daily. This concentrated green drink was not psychoactive and flooded the body with cannabinoid nutrients that helped reverse degenerative diseases.

Putting it mildly, the information was mind-boggling. And that’s when I realized that there was a story to be told. Nobody had ever written a fictional novel about medical marijuana that didn’t include “stoner” stereotypes or pander to fear. It took me another five months and hundreds of hours of one-on-one interviews with medical marijuana patients, caregivers, growers, dispensary owners and experts within the cannabis industry to develop what would become Betty’s (Little Basement) Garden.

The book focuses on 58-year-old Betty Craven, a strikingly beautiful former Texas beauty queen who is a staunch Republican and widow to her equally conservative career military husband, Frank. Betty’s only child, a son, died in his mid-20s from a drug overdose. When we meet Betty, her life is in suspended animation. The walls are closing in around her. All she has left that she loves is her award-winning flower garden and the remnants of equipment left over from her failed gourmet chocolate store. When she comes to the shocking conclusion that her entire life has been wasted, a rebellious spirit that Betty has kept hidden, explodes to the surface. Her conservative world spins 180 degrees around as she comes face-to-face with her biggest fears. And one of those fears is marijuana. The path she chooses is paved with secrecy, eccentric characters, toe-curling love, life-changing events, and a connection to her unconventional, basement garden that she never could have imagined.

My intention when I wrote Betty’s (Little Basement) Garden was to show the truth about the medical marijuana industry in Colorado. It’s not all sunshine and lollipops. I don’t sugarcoat the realities of working in the cannabis world, nor do I romanticize what it means to be a grower for a seriously ill patient who depends upon your green thumb to make his or her medicine. The book illustrates a massive shift in the “anti-pot” propaganda that I grew up hearing and believing. My hope is that it’s not just an entertaining story; my hope is that it’s also enlightening for those who read it and believe the way I used to about this ancient herb. As Betty Craven says, “There’s nothing more liberating than releasing a limiting belief.”

To read or download an extensive, 840 page compilation of published medical studies that show the proactive use of cannabis in various forms, please go to <http://beyondchronic.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Grannys-List-July-2012.pdf>

Author website: www.laureldewey.com
Join Laurel on her official Facebook author page.
Buy Betty’s (Little Basement) Garden on Amazon http://www.amazon.com/Bettys-Little-Basement-Garden-ebook/dp/B007WSNHTY/ref=pd_sim_kstore_4



BUSINESS LOANS

First Community has been happily serving people like you, for over 60 years by providing affordable personalized services you want and need. We believe the people of our community are our business. So we do what it takes to make every dollar you work hard to earn, work hard for you by offering low rates and eliminating unnecessary fees, like prepayment penalties.

No prepayment penalty

After 60 years of helping people realize their dreams, we can help your business too. Call today and talk with a local business lending expert.



Lending you more to work with.

103 S Redwood Hwy | Cave Junction | 541.592.3191



Federally insured by NCUA.

myFirstccu.org



LOSTFORESTRECORDINGS.COM
would like to thank



for providing internet access during this year’s
HOPE MOUNTAIN BARTER FAIRE

Boys & Girls Wilderness Overnight Camps

for students entering 6th, 7th, 8th grades.
At Siskiyou Field Institute in Selma

Learn fire and shelter building, animal tracking, wild crafting, compass and maps, creek swimming, team building games, and ecology. Some scholarship funds available.

Girls camp: July 15th 9am -19th 4pm
Boys camp: July 8th 9am-12th 4pm

1241 Illinois River Rd

Cost: free to Lorna Byrne MS students, others pay \$195. Food and tents provided.

Teen Wilderness Backpacking

for students ages 13-15

Learn the basics of backpacking on this trip in a local wilderness area. Skills include: map and compass, local ecology, Leave No Trace principles. Backpacking gear provided upon request.

Girls Trip: July 28th-30th
Boys Trip: July 21st-23rd
Cost: \$90 food included
Call: # 541- 597-8530 or email youthprograms@thesfi.org for more information.