

420’s long, strange trip to pot holiday began in California

By PAUL ELIAS
Associated Press

SAN RAFAEL, Calif. — Friday is April 20, or 4/20. That’s the numerical code for marijuana’s high holiday, a homage to pot’s enduring appeal and universal slang for smoking.

Festivities are planned worldwide, culminating with a synchronized smoke at 4:20 p.m.

How the marijuana-loving world came to mark the occasion is believed traceable to five Northern California men now in their 60s with bad backs and graying hair. They are the unofficial grandmasters by virtue of the code they created nearly 50 years ago as students at a suburban San Francisco high school in 1971.

“We thought it was a joke then,” said David Reddix, a filmmaker and retired CNN cameraman. “We still do.”

Reddix and his four buddies — Steve Capper, Larry Schwartz, Jeff Noel and Mark Gravich — were a stoner clique who hung out at a particular wall between classes at San Rafael High School. They dubbed themselves “The Waldos,” a term coined by comedian Buddy Hackett to describe odd people.

One fall afternoon in 1971 a non-Waldo classmate came to the wall with an intriguing tale and a crudely drawn map.

The map purported to show the location of a marijuana garden in the forest of nearby Point Reyes National Seashore. The classmate said the pot patch belonged to his brother-in-law, a Coast Guard reservist stationed at Point Reyes.

The classmate explained his brother-in-law, paranoid of exposure and washing out of the reserves, was renouncing ownership of the



In this April 13 photo, the Waldos, from left, Mark Gravitch, Larry Schwartz, Dave Reddix, Jeffrey Noel and Steve Capper sit on a wall they used to frequent at San Rafael High School in San Rafael, Calif. Friday is April 20, or 4/20. That’s the numerical code for marijuana’s high holiday, a celebration and homage to pot’s enduring and universal slang for smoking. And the five Northern California high school stoner buddies widely credited with creating the shorthand slang for getting high nearly 50 years ago now serve as the day’s unofficial grand masters.

garden. He handed Capper the map and said The Waldos were welcome to the marijuana.

The five excited friends made plans to find the weed after school and decided to meet in front of the school’s statue of Louis Pasteur at 4:20 p.m., when two of them finished football practice.

They piled into Capper’s 1966 Chevy Impala, popped in a Grateful Dead 8-track tape and passed around joints as they drove the 45 minutes to the coast.

The five, now firmly middle-class fathers dressed in Polo shirts and khaki pants, laugh about tumbling out of a marijuana smoke-

filled car when they arrived at their destination.

“It was straight of a Cheech and Chong movie,” Schwartz said.

They didn’t find the patch that day, but vowed to keep searching. They would pass in the halls and whisper “420 Louis” to each other if a new attempt was planned, indicating they should meet at 4:20 p.m. at the Pasteur statue.

The patch was never found.

“We were probably too stoned,” Schwartz said.

But the “420 Louis” stuck as code for “let’s get high at the statue after school.” Soon after, it was shortened to

simply 420 and meant “let’s get high anywhere.”

There were myriad reasons for the teens to speak in code about smoking marijuana in 1971. Marijuana’s growing social tolerance was still decades away and people were receiving stiff prison sentences after being caught with even small amounts.

Another big reason: Noel’s father was a narcotics agent for the California Department of Justice.

“He had an inkling we smoked,” Noel said. “But I don’t think he ever caught on to 420.”

The five Waldos never moved far away and all

remain close. Gravich’s youngest daughter attends his alma mater and his oldest daughter is a recent graduate. Both say they’ve long been aware of their father’s involvement in creating 420.

“The kids here think it’s pretty cool,” said Julia Gravich, a sophomore.

The code remained confined to The Waldos’ social circle until they began hanging out backstage at Grateful Dead concerts. Reddix’s older brother was friends with band member Phil Lesh and that led to backstage passes and smoking sessions with the roadies and other crew members, who picked up the

code.

The number really took off in the late 1980s when flyers were circulated at Dead concerts proclaiming 420 to be the password of stoner culture. The flyers went on to explain that 420 was California police code for marijuana smoking in progress. It’s not, but that and other origin stories continue to circulate to the point that Capper and Reddix have committed themselves to preserving as much proof as they can that they are the originators.

They tracked down the Coast Guard reservist to record his recollections confirming he grew a marijuana garden and drew the map that launched the treasure hunt. With his permission, they obtained his Coast Guard records, which show him stationed at Point Reyes at the appropriate time.

They keep those records in a rented safe deposit box in a San Francisco bank where they also store other documentation, including postmarked letters they exchanged in the mid-1970s discussing 420. The San Francisco bank’s address, as it happens, is 420 Montgomery Street.

The Oxford English Dictionary added 420 to its lexicon last year after reviewing the Waldos’ records and credits the men as the creators.

Millions of dollars have been made over the years exploiting the number, from T-shirts and hats to cannabis businesses with 420 in their names. Hotels and tour companies advertise themselves as “420 friendly” and dating sites contain listings for people “420 compatible.”

Though dozens of 420-related trademarks have been issued to various companies, The Waldos hold only one.

Four Oregon cities on list of nation’s worst for air pollution

SALEM (AP) — A new report lists four Oregon metro areas among the nation’s worst for air pollution spikes.

The Statesman Journal reports that the list from the American Lung Association ranks Eugene, Bend, Portland

and Medford-Grants Pass as among the worst for short-term particle pollution — spikes lasting hours to days that increase the risk of heart attacks, strokes and cardiovascular disease.

Eugene fared worst among

Oregon metro area — at 24th — and Bend wasn’t far behind at 26th.

Forest fires, weather inversions and the use of wood-burning stoves are common reasons for such spikes.

The report looked at

pollution levels from 2014 to 2016, using data that states report to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The Lung Association called on the Oregon Legislature to do more to counteract air pollution.

Corrections

The April 19 article “Former police station sold to Pioneer” misstated the listing and sales price of the old Pendleton police station. It was originally listed at \$300,000, lowered to \$280,000 and sold for \$250,000.

The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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AccuWeather

Forecast

TODAY

Mostly sunny

SATURDAY

Breezy and cooler with clearing

SUNDAY

Intervals of clouds and sunshine

MONDAY

Plenty of sun

TUESDAY

Increasing cloudiness

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

68°	47°	60°	36°	58°	36°	65°	40°	71°	47°
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HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

72°	49°	65°	36°	64°	35°	70°	41°	76°	50°
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ALMANAC

PENDLETON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE

HIGH	LOW
Yesterday 63°	36°
Normals 63°	40°
Records 88° (1934)	23° (1966)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	1.37"
Normal month to date	0.76"
Year to date	5.08"
Last year to date	7.42"
Normal year to date	4.72"

HERMISTON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE

HIGH	LOW
Yesterday 68°	37°
Normals 66°	40°
Records 90° (1934)	24° (1982)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	1.55"
Normal month to date	0.50"
Year to date	3.93"
Last year to date	5.46"
Normal year to date	3.61"

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	6:01 a.m.
Sunset tonight	7:48 p.m.
Moonrise today	9:39 a.m.
Moonset today	12:10 a.m.

First	Full	Last	New
Apr 22	Apr 29	May 7	May 15

AccuWeather

DOWNLOAD THE APP

Seattle 62/44

Wenatchee 67/44

Spokane 62/45

Tacoma 63/42

Moses Lake 68/47

Pullman 62/43

Yakima 72/44

Kennewick 72/50

Walla Walla 69/50

Lewiston 68/48

Enterprise 62/39

La Grande 65/42

John Day 66/41

Ontario 72/44

Caldwell 71/42

Burns 65/37

Klamath Falls 66/33

Medford 72/44

Aberdeen 56/44

Olympia 62/42

Longview 63/44

Salem 66/47

Albany 65/45

Eugene 65/45

Bend 66/36

Corvallis 65/46

Portland 67/48

The Dalles 71/48

Hermiston 72/49

Pendleton 68/47

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

Coastal Oregon: Times of clouds and sun today, except sunnier in the south.

Eastern Washington: Times of clouds and sun today, except increasing clouds across the south.

Cascades: Partly sunny today.

Eastern and Central Oregon: Mostly sunny today; pleasant near the Cascades. Partly cloudy tonight.

Western Washington: Mostly cloudy today.

Northern California: Plenty of sunshine today; pleasant in central parts. Mainly clear tonight.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sat.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	55	45	c	55	40	c
Baker City	65	37	s	61	28	pc
Bend	66	36	pc	57	28	pc
Brookings	58	44	s	64	45	pc
Burns	65	37	s	62	30	pc
Enterprise	62	39	s	55	28	pc
Eugene	65	45	pc	60	38	pc
Heppner	67	44	pc	59	33	pc
Hermiston	72	49	pc	65	36	pc
John Day	66	41	s	58	32	pc
Klamath Falls	66	33	s	67	32	pc
La Grande	65	42	s	57	31	pc
Meacham	62	39	s	54	28	pc
Medford	72	44	s	68	40	pc
Newport	56	46	pc	55	40	pc
North Bend	57	46	pc	57	41	pc
Ontario	72	44	s	72	39	s
Pasco	72	51	pc	66	38	pc
Pendleton	68	47	s	60	36	pc
Portland	67	48	pc	60	42	c
Redmond	69	38	pc	60	29	pc
Salem	66	47	pc	61	40	pc
Spokane	62	45	pc	55	35	pc
Ukiah	63	35	s	53	25	pc
Vancouver	65	46	pc	58	39	c
Walla Walla	69	50	s	62	40	pc
Yakima	72	44	pc	63	37	pc

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Sat.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	86	62	s	86	56	r
Hong Kong	81	73	c	83	75	t
Jerusalem	73	56	s	69	53	pc
London	75	54	pc	75	56	pc
Mexico City	81	55	pc	82	58	pc
Moscow	56	45	pc	63	35	r
Paris	82	57	pc	81	57	pc
Rome	76	55	s	74	55	s
Seoul	76	49	s	75	51	s
Sydney	77	66	pc	75	65	pc
Tokyo	75	59	pc	75	61	s

WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Saturday
Boardman	WSW 6-12	WSW 8-16
Pendleton	WSW 6-12	W 10-20

UV INDEX TODAY

2	4	6	6	4	2
8 a.m.	10 a.m.	Noon	2 p.m.	4 p.m.	6 p.m.
0-2, Low; 3-5, Moderate; 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme					
The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.					

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NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

National Summary: Rain and snow showers are forecast to exit northern New England today. Beneficial rain will gather over the southern High Plains with snow in the southern Rockies and gusty thunderstorms near Mexico.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 90° in Tucson, Ariz. Low 6° in Stambaugh, Mich.

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sat.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	61	38	c	69	44	s
Atlanta	68	46	s	72	53	s
Atlantic City	54	37	pc	56	40	s
Baltimore	57	36	s	62	41	s
Billings	60	37	c	70	42	pc
Birmingham	71	46	s	75	56	s
Boise	69	46	s	70	41	pc
Boston	52	38	pc	54	37	s
Charleston, SC	69	48	s	71	54	s
Charleston, WV	59	32	s	66	40	s
Chicago	55	34	s	52	38	pc
Cleveland	47	32	s	52	37	s
Dallas	71	52	pc	61	49	r
Denver	52	30	r	49	31	sn
Detroit	56	33	s	57	37	pc
El Paso	78	54	s	79	57	s
Fairbanks	29	17	sn	41	19	c
Fargo	55	33	pc	57	38	pc
Honolulu	83	73	c	84	73	r
Houston	74	59	pc	74	63	t
Indianapolis	58	36	s	58	42	pc
Jacksonville	67	55	pc	74	60	pc
Kansas City	60	42	pc	50	42	c
Las Vegas	81	62	s	85	66	s
Little Rock	67	46	s	68	54	c
Los Angeles	73	54	pc	80	57	s
Louisville	64	39	s	67	48	s
Memphis	68	47	s	71	56	c
Miami	87	71	pc	85	73	c
Millwaukee	47	32	s	49	35	pc
Minneapolis	50	35	pc	54	36	pc
Nashville	67	41	s	71	53	s
New Orleans	70	57	pc	76	65	c
New York City	53	38	pc	59	41	c
Oklahoma City	67	45	pc	52	42	r
Omaha	59	42	pc	54	40	c
Philadelphia	54	36	pc	61	42	c
Phoenix	81	60	s	90	66	s
Portland, ME	51	36	pc	50	33	pc
Providence	54	36	pc	56	36	s
Raleigh						