

Culture: How old were you the first time you smoked marijuana? Tell us a little about that experience.

Jorge: I was 16 years old. We bought a lid (about an ounce) of Mexican dirt weed, nicked a tobacco pipe from my father and four of us jumped in the car. We passed the pipe for a long time and finally it hit me! I thought I was in a movie . . . I could see it playing on the screen in front of me, but I was in it!

Culture: When did you first start to cultivate marijuana?

Jorge: I had small closet and outdoor gardens during university. It was not until 1978 when I grew my first big outdoor garden. I grew about 100 plants in a guerilla garden in Southern California. The genetics came from Mexican and Colombian bag seed and not acclimated to the area. It was good marijuana for the time, but it soon got better!

Culture: How were you able to parlay your cultivation experience into a career of writing books and articles?

Jorge: I moved to Oregon in the early 1980s and visited “Halide of Oregon” (now American Agriculture) and learned more about HID lights. I had already seen them a few years before, but this time, people were growing successful crops. I bought some lights and started growing and grew many crops. My world started to evolve around indoor growing. I also noticed that there was a lot of misinformation and many people had crop failure. I made many trips to The Netherlands and spent a lot of time in Amsterdam and Nijmegen hanging out at the Cannabis Castle with Neville . . . lots of old times.

Culture: You lived in Barcelona, Spain for several years and recently moved to Nor Cal. What prompted you to move to Spain?

Jorge: The George W. Bush administration, we watched the second plane hit the World Trade Tower on television in Switzerland while doing research. Then we saw Bush’s first speech with the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the front row. You could tell where the nation was headed . . . I returned to the USA for a few months we gathered our stuff and moved to Spain. We had many friends in Europe, especially Spain. There are several cannabis magazines, *Cañamo*, *Soft Secrets* and *Yerba*, 500 hydroponic stores and it is legal to grow and consume marijuana for personal use. We also had the opportunity to publish our books in French, German, Spanish and Italian. Soon we will publish books in Dutch and Russian. I also started and continue to write for 20 European cannabis magazines in 10 languages.

Culture: How are you adjusting to being back home?

Jorge: It is very different being here. I now have a medical card and California identification. I can buy medicinal cannabis legally. Something about this is difficult for me to comprehend, it's all legal! I'm not used to this in America, but I'm a quick study. People drive cars everywhere here. Commercialism underlies every aspect of life here. California is such a rich state and an exciting place to be now. I am enjoying being here, but few people are interested in the World Cup. Spain is ranked number one and the favorite to win. If we win, I'm going back for the party!

Culture: What do you think of what is going on here in California and did you follow what was happening here while you were in Spain?

Jorge: The world is watching the legalization movement in California. Many major movements – flower power, free speech, gay liberation, clothes, music, etc. – started in California and the Bay Area. Medical marijuana and full legalization have come to a head here first. The negative perceptions about marijuana are changing rapidly, now the laws are following. Few legislators don't have the interest to step into the arena of legalization because it has a history of being political suicide. The Control and Tax Cannabis 2010 ballot measure that will be voted on in November could legalize cannabis like we have never seen before. I recently attended two cannabis fairs, one in San Francisco and the other in Los Angeles. These fairs reminded me of the early cannabis fairs in Europe. There is a buzz in the air!

Culture: After twenty five years you recently revealed your real name, George Van Patten, to the world. What was it that made you decide to do that?

Jorge: Wearing the wig all the time! I made several (disguised) presentations at the Cannabis Cup in Amsterdam, heavily attended by Americans. When in disguise, there was always a line of people wanting to speak with me. As soon as the disguise was gone, I could go back to normal life. It also afforded me pretty good anonymity. You must, as I do, have many friends that have been or that are in USA prisons now. Surrounded by such friends, I felt most comfortable in dreads.

I attended and spoke at 6-8 European cannabis fairs a year for the last 8 years and never in disguise. I got used to being a normal person around normal people. Once the wind started blowing the other direction in the USA I thought it was time to come out of the closet. Now I'm carrying a medical card!

Here is the direct link to Jorge Cervantes' coming out of the closet interview on National Public Radio, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=123495505>.

Culture: Does that mean we have seen the last of the beret and dreadlocks?

Jorge: Oh no! This is the symbol that everybody knows. The image has been in print for years, there are more than two million downloads of Jorge video grow clips on www.youtube.com, the brand is there. I'm thinking about doing everything from now on with my real hair. But I think people will always remember the distinctive dreads.

Culture: Your book ‘*Marijuana Horticulture*’ is a required text book at Oaksterdam University. That’s a really big deal. How did that make you feel when you first found out that it was a required text for the first cannabis college in the U.S.?

Jorge: I felt great! To know that the administration, developers and instructors chose *Marijuana Horticulture* as their primary instruction manual was a real vote of confidence. The first edition was published in 1983, within a couple of years growers had dubbed it “the bible.” It’s in the fifth edition now. The next edition will be completely rewritten and up to date. Knowing so many students, care providers, and dispensaries count on my work is a big responsibility and I take it seriously.

Culture: You toured Oaksterdam University and met it’s founder Richard Lee not too long ago. What was your impression of both the school and Richard Lee?

Jorge: I have known Richard for a long time. Richard Lee is a personal hero of mine. He is on a mission that he lives and breathes and he takes it seriously. He puts in the work to make it happen. He is all action! Richard fears little or nothing and has the good sense how to slow down when necessary and find real solutions. Not too many people have his ability to lead and manage people as well as push laws to their limits. If you have not been to Oaksterdam University, go now! <http://oaksterdamuniversity.com/>.

Oaksterdam University is brilliant! Richard is cloning care givers and dispensary owners every day. Last count, Oaksterdam University had 10,000 graduates! Richard Lee has made an immense impact on cannabis legalization. Send him some money for the Control and Tax Cannabis ballot measure. He already invested 1.3 million dollars of his money. I send him money, you should too! Hit the site now, fire up a spliff, think about your friends in prison, roll out your investment in the future and send it NOW! <http://www.taxcannabis.org/>

Culture: Richard Lee is responsible for getting the **Tax and Regulate (check name???)** initiative on the November ballot to legalize marijuana for adult use. Do you think that will pass, and if it does what impact do you think it will have on the war on drugs in the long run?

Jorge: The initiative has a fair chance of passing. Now it has come down to politics and power. The workers at Oaksterdam University and several other Oakland medical dispensaries joined the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 5, a brilliant move that helps legitimize the dispensaries and university in the eyes of the public as well as garner union support, and votes.

Certainly opponents to the initiative will bark the old fear-based arguments – save the children, it’s a gateway drug, it’s immoral, it promotes crime, it’s illegal, etc. They will ramp up their rhetoric as the election nears. But, with the slow economy, budget crisis, wars, and environmental disasters abounding, cannabis legalization might just squeak by.

When the initiative passes, it will equate to taking the second big chip out of the Berlin Wall. The first chip fell when medical marijuana became legal in California. There will be a full-on gold rush. Soon California will overproduce and the product will be exported to other less

fortunate states. Other states will watch California for a few years after cannabis becomes legal, and they will legalize too. More states will pass medical marijuana laws. A tipping point will be reached nationally and Federal Laws will have to change. First it will be reduced from Schedule I to Schedule II drug. Then the wall will continue to fall. New money, lots of it will enter the equation and employment opportunities will shift from law enforcement to business and health oriented services.

Culture: What does the future hold for Jorge Cervantes? Where do you see yourself in 5 or 10 years?

Jorge: I'm 56 now, let's see, I have been in this business publically for 27 years, and another 10 years professionally. Five or ten more years . . . I can wait that long for cannabis to become totally legal in the world! Meantime I'll keep doing what I'm doing making more books and DVDs.