



BY JONAH RASKIN
PHOTOS BY LOCHFOOT

JORGE CERVANTES

THE HIGH TIMES INTERVIEW

WHAT JOHNNY APPLESEED DID FOR APPLES, JORGE CERVANTES HAS DONE FOR CANNABIS. OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS, NO OTHER PERSON HAS CONTRIBUTED MORE TO SPREADING INFORMATION ABOUT THE CULTIVATION OF A PLANT THAT HUMANS HAVE GROWN FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. NOT SURPRISINGLY, *HIGH TIMES* HONORED HIM WITH ITS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD IN AMSTERDAM IN 2013.

JORGE CERVANTES, BORN SIX DECADES AGO AS GEORGE VAN PATTEN, SAVES EVERY FACT ABOUT CULTIVATION—INDOORS AND OUTDOORS—THAT COMES HIS WAY. WHAT'S MORE, HE'S PACKING ALL OF THE WISDOM AND LORE HE'S GATHERED INTO A NEW, PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED 512-PAGE BOOK, *THE CANNABIS ENCYCLOPEDIA: MEDICINE, HORTICULTURE, CONCENTRATES AND COOKING*, WHICH IS SURE TO SURPASS HIS PREVIOUS MASTERWORK, *MARIJUANA HORTICULTURE: THE INDOOR/OUTDOOR MEDICAL GROWER'S BIBLE*.

CERVANTES SMOKED HIS FIRST JOINT IN 1968, BACK WHEN A POUND OF MEXICAN—WITH SEEDS AND STEMS—SOLD FOR \$100. HE HASN'T STOPPED SMOKING SINCE THEN, ALTHOUGH HE ALSO ENJOYS CONCENTRATES AND HAS EATEN HIS SHARE OF POT BROWNIES.

THIS MORNING, BRIGHT AND EARLY, CERVANTES IS ALREADY ONLINE AT HIS HOME NEAR THE TOWN OF SONOMA, CA, WHERE HE LIVES FOR HALF THE YEAR WITH HIS WIFE ESTELLA, WHO EDITS HIS BOOKS; A CHIHUAHUA NAMED MIA (WHO'S THE SIZE OF A LARGE BUD); AND THE COMPUTERS THAT STORE HIS LIFE'S WORK. HE HASN'T GROWN A SINGLE PLANT THIS YEAR—HE STILL HAS POUNDS FROM LAST SEASON. WHEN HE ISN'T IN SONOMA, HE SPENDS HIS TIME IN BARCELONA, SPAIN.

IN ADDITION TO HIS BOOKS, CERVANTES HAS MADE NEARLY 80 VIDEOS ABOUT CANNABIS. HE'S NOT JUST AN AUTHOR; HE'S ALSO A PHOTOGRAPHER, PUBLISHER AND PUBLICIST, A ONE-MAN COTTAGE INDUSTRY WITH GLOBAL REACH. HIS FACE IS KNOWN WORLDWIDE. (IN FACT, HE'S PUTTING IT ON THE COVER OF HIS NEW BOOK.)

JORGE (OR IS IT GEORGE?) MAKES TWO CUPS OF ESPRESSO, ONE FOR HIMSELF AND ONE FOR ME, ADDS BAILEYS AND STIRS, AND SITS DOWN AT THE KITCHEN TABLE. MIA JUMPS INTO HIS LAP AND SITS MESMERIZED DURING OUR MID-MORNING CONVERSATION.

How does it feel to have the *High Times* Lifetime Achievement Award?

It's a huge honor. Lots of others are no less deserving. I didn't expect it—I guess it means I'm old. They don't give an award like this when you're young.

Do your neighbors here in Sonoma know who you are?

I have the reputation as the neighborhood doper. They've seen me on YouTube. They thought I was odd, and then a gay couple moved in, and now my wife and I don't stand out as much as we did.

There are a lot of different stories about where you're from.

Kids make up stuff about me on Wikipedia. I don't care. In fact, I'm from Ontario, Oregon. I'm 60 years old. I was always the gardener in my family—as a kid, I raised radishes, tomatoes and corn. I loved growing vegetables.

Do you go back to Ontario?

I went to my 40th high-school reunion. I took some pot with me and opened the bag in the hotel. You could smell it from the lobby to the fourth floor ... the whole place stank!

You smoked your first joint in 1968 and published your first book in 1983. What was going on between those years?

I went to school in the

States, Spain and Mexico. I had a landscape gardening business, I grew cannabis, and I got married in 1981. I was busy.

You're out there in the public eye, but you're also mysterious.

I've had to be to survive. I usually don't tell people my actual birthday, for example, and I've never really said much about those two years from 1990 to 1992 when I went to South America and Australia and was largely invisible.

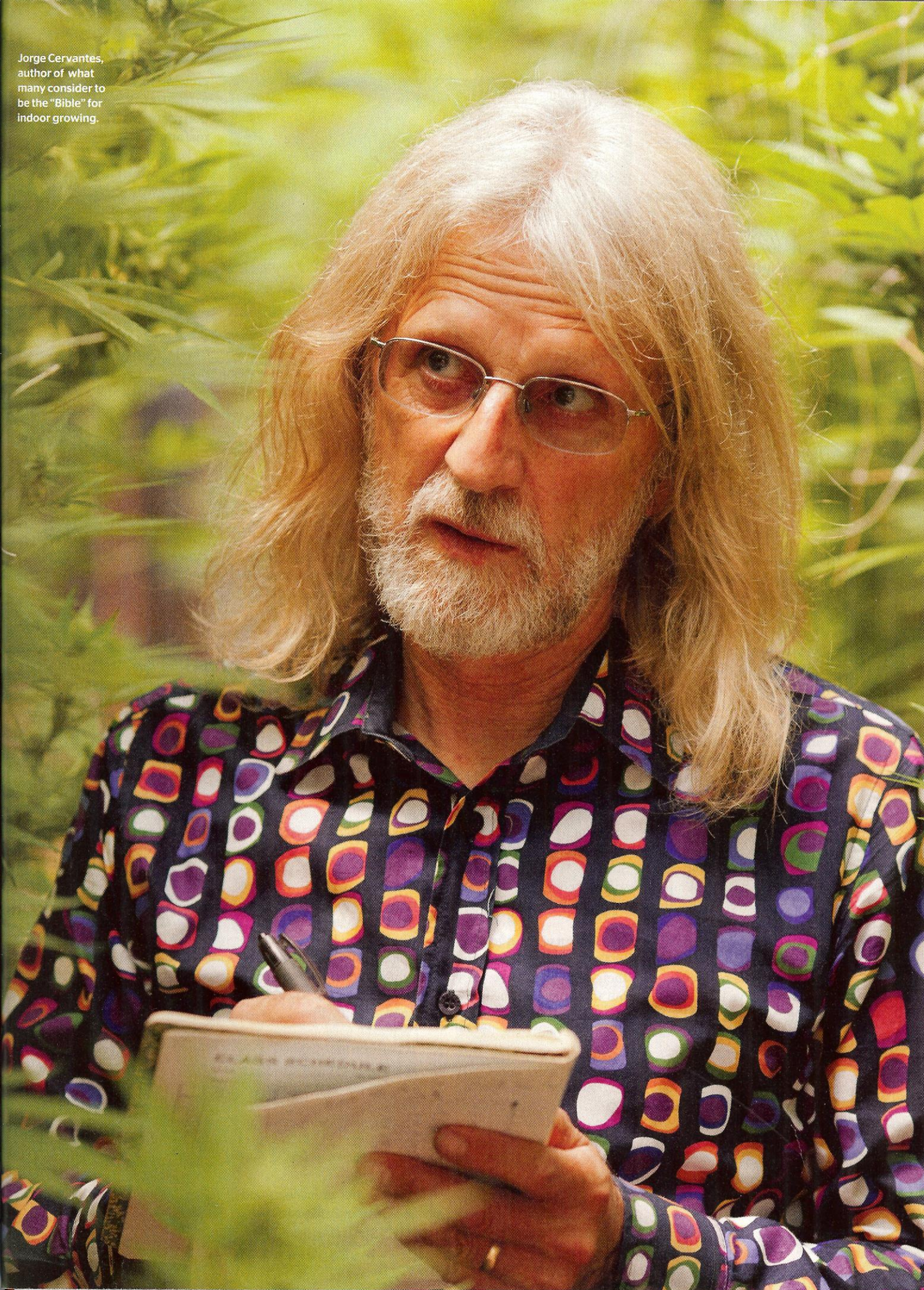
What were you doing there?

I can't tell you everything, but I can tell you that I sampled marijuana wherever I went. I spent most of my time in Chile and in the Amazon and then in Brazil smoking *maconha*, as they call marijuana there. I never found any dope that was special. I learned that in the US and in Europe, we were ahead of them in terms of quality.

You've lived in Amsterdam, too, haven't you?

I had a lot of Dutch friends, like Mila Jensen, who was big on hash, and I knew a lot of Americans, too. In the mid-1990s, a dollar went a long way. I rode my bicycle everywhere to visit growrooms, though it took a long time for people to trust me enough to let me inside. It was in Amsterdam in the 1990s that

Jorge Cervantes,
author of what
many consider to
be the "Bible" for
indoor growing.



I realized a book about cannabis has to be in full color.

Why did you decide to write a new book?

It's amazing how much new information is out there. The technological changes are amazing. Now you can measure the cannabinoids in your own plants, as well as test for mildew and fungus. You can also develop different varieties much faster.

Where does your information about cannabis come from?

A lot of it comes from the Internet. For years, information about cannabis was withheld from the public. It was a secretive industry—growers themselves didn't share. Now you can find everything you want on your computer.

I know there are secrets about cultivation. Are there also secrets to writing?

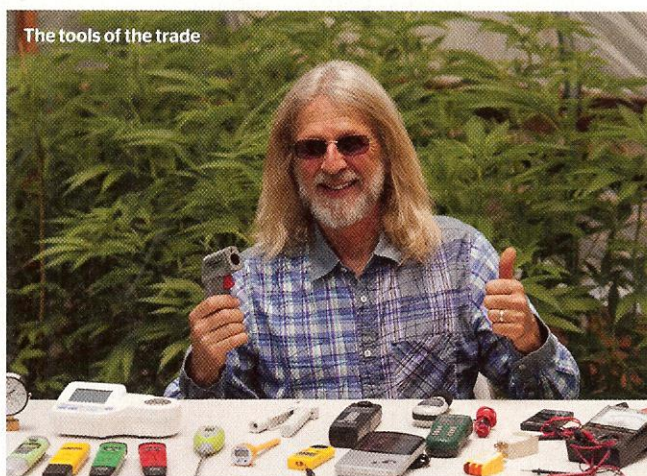
You have to keep readers hooked. I like to have a balance between words and images. I learned that by writing for magazines.

In your books, you emphasize cleanliness, safety and orderliness. What's that about?

Cleanliness is essential. Your tools have to be clean, and your garden has to be neat and tidy. If it's not clean, you have a much harder time troubleshooting—dealing with insects or fungus, for example.

You've also urged precaution and even secrecy. Isn't that a real challenge?

I think of it as a double-edged sword. I've been paranoid a lot in my life, and I've kept a lot of things confidential. Also, a lot of friends have gone to jail, or had their gardens invaded, their crops ripped off and/or confiscated. There are good reasons to keep secrets. On the other hand, it's really helpful to share information—and also seeds and clones. It's a tough line to walk.



“There's more plant innovation in Europe than the States. There's a more highly developed seed market there, and seeds fly back and forth across borders all the time.”

Do you think that experience helps? The more you grow, the better you are walking that fine line?

Experienced growers learn who to trust and who not to trust, but you still make mistakes. There's no way to be 100 percent right about people.

Are there common horticultural mistakes that growers make when they begin?

They try to do too much. They overwater or overfertilize. Those are the two most common mistakes. Or they get advice from the wrong people. Sometimes the quality of the water is poor or the plants don't get air circulating.

What about veteran growers?

They get cocky. They think their dope is the best. They put their buds on the table and say, “My bud's bigger than your bud.”

What about harvesting? What's your method?

I always harvest in stages. I don't take the whole plant all at once; I take the outer buds first and then the inner buds little by little. I get 40 percent more that way than if I harvest everything together.

I remember harvest parties where growers brought weed and coke so they could smoke and snort and go on smoking for hours.

There was a time when *everyone* had coke. You were popular if you had it. I sold it, too.

It's taken you a long time to write your new book. Why is that?

It's hard to get it right. It's also a big responsibility. People will be counting on me to have all the latest accurate information. I have to rely on others for some stuff, like carbon filters. There's a Swiss guy, Mark Montandon, who's the world's expert on carbon filters. I can trust him. Technological developments—such as plasma lights—are happening very quickly. They're as good as sunlight.

Where are the biggest technological developments happening?

In the USA. There's more money here for research and development, and the velocity of change is way faster, too.

I remember when everybody in Northern California was

growing *sinsemilla* and trying to figure out the same cultivation problems. That made for real advances.

For a time, *sinsemilla* was the buzzword; now you hear “CBD” everywhere. Five years ago, there were almost no CBD-rich plants. Now they're all over the place.

What about innovations in botany?

There's more plant innovation in Europe than the States. There's a more highly developed seed market there, and seeds fly back and forth across borders all the time. They have seeds that are guaranteed to produce female plants. You can also get plants that will flower after three weeks.

You have two names: George Van Patten and Jorge Cervantes. Are they two different people? You were born George Van Patten—Jorge came along later on.

They are definitely two different people. When I'm George, I'm Jorge's manager. George speaks English. Jorge is bilingual and speaks English and Spanish.

When did you first use the name Jorge Cervantes?

In 1983, when I published my first book. My wife's last name is Cervantes, and one of my favorite authors is Miguel Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote*. I was honoring her family and the father of the novel. I'm really happy I chose that name.

How does George feel about Jorge?

It took years to develop Jorge Cervantes's personality. He's not a perfect guy. He makes mistakes—sometimes he's a bit of a fool. But people identify with him. They see that if he makes mistakes, it's okay if they make mistakes, too. No one is going to be perfect at cultivation. Jorge isn't ... not even after all these years.

People are naturally anxious about growing, so there's no need to make them more anxious, right?

Exactly. It helps to be relaxed and comfortable and take it all in stride.

What I notice about you perhaps more than anything else is your sense of humor.

If you can't laugh about cannabis, you shouldn't be in the business.

Is your life in Spain different than here in California?

I am much more social there. I live right in the center of Barcelona. The food is great, the wine is excellent, and the cannabis is first-class. There's also tasty Moroccan hash.

Is there a lot of cannabis in Barcelona?

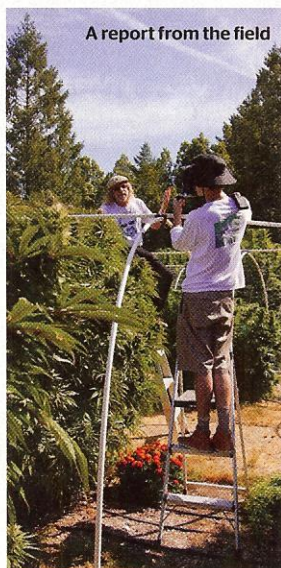
More than you could want. The last time I landed at the Barcelona airport from the States, I ran into someone I knew who said, "Do you have any pot?" I didn't because I'd been on the plane. He handed me two huge joints. I met a friend picking me up and we immediately went into the parking lot and puffed out.

I've heard Spain is the new Holland.

There's a ton of tasting clubs. You can buy by the gram and you can smoke on the premises. I go to the Resin Club. A friend owns it; it's a very comfortable place to hang out. In Spain, the only rule in the cannabis clubs is that to be a member you can't be a cop.

What else about cops in Spain?

Try not to smoke right in their faces. That's the rule. Otherwise, they don't care. American cops watch too much TV—they have inflated images of



"If you can't laugh about cannabis, you shouldn't be in the business."

who they are. Hell, they have a powerful lobby.

Do people go to jail for cultivation in Spain?

Rarely. I have a buddy who was arrested with 190 kilos; he said it was all for personal use. He didn't do jail time, and while they confiscated most of it, they didn't confiscate *all* of it. He moved to the next valley and started to grow there and had no more problems with the cops.

I hear people say the federal prohibition against pot will end soon. What do you think?

There's too much money and power at stake for it to end soon. The war against weed pays for salaries, prisons, and social workers who take your kids away if you're found guilty of cultivation. The prison-industrial

complex isn't going to grind to a halt. We go on growing, harvesting and smoking, and the police go on making arrests and sending people to jail. They don't want the prohibition to end. They'd lose their jobs.

You've been consuming cannabis for 45 years. What have you noticed in that time?

I've performed a long series of experiments on myself. The very first thing I learned was that they—the government, teachers and scientists—lied to me, lied to *all* of us, about cannabis. I smoked and got high, and none of the awful things they told me about it were true. That made me skeptical about all official stories—not just about cannabis.

What about your mind and body after 45 years?

I'm in good physical condition. And my mind is as sharp as ever. I couldn't be writing books and making videos if there had been harmful affects from smoking cannabis. I smoke less now than I used to and use tinctures and edibles more often. If I have a problem, it's that I think too much—I can suffer from insomnia. Cannabis helps me relax and get a good night's sleep.

You had a column in *HT* for about a decade. How was that?

It was a great deal for both of us. They needed me because I was an expert, and I needed them to get my stuff out there. *HT* was the only cannabis publication at that time. These days, I love the Cannabis Cup events—I wouldn't miss them for the world. 🌿

Watch the history of Jorge, our Lifetime Achievement award winner at hightimes.com/jorgewinner.

