

Interview with Jorge Cervantes – <https://softsecrets.com/es-ES/articulo/entrevista-jorge-cervantes>

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A Conversation with Jorge Cervantes

Jorge Cervantes has transformed the marijuana landscape by spreading his knowledge on cannabis cultivation, making him arguably one of the most influential gardeners since Theophrastus wrote *Enquiry into Plants* over 2,000 years ago. In the hands of Jorge, complex technical information is transformed into readable prose that anyone can understand. He is the prolific author of more than 25 marijuana grow books in 7 languages and writes for more than 20 cannabis magazines. Jorge's recent, *Cannabis Encyclopaedia*, (ISBN: 978-18788233420, available on amazon) is a comprehensive guide to growing with 600 pages of knowledge supported by more than 2,000 photos. The forward to the Encyclopaedia by former President of Mexico, Vicente Fox, demonstrates the high-level international respect that Jorge now commands. For an influential leader in his field, Jorge is a remarkably humble person whose wisdom extends from the technicalities of growing to key industry developments.

At Spannabis 2017, Jorge signed books and answered questions from the endless line of interested people. He was promoting a new project that condensed his knowledge into a pocket-sized book. After two hours, he took a break. Looking tired he told me, "I try to make sure that everyone gets an opportunity to talk. There are some wonderful people with some great questions. I am just happy to help them".

Interviews with Jorge often focus on how to grow or process cannabis, but he has a lot more to say. He is an activist who is passionate about human and environmental rights. He sees the cannabis industry changing and how politicians and investors are benefiting from years of sacrifice by activists who suffered because of prohibition created by politicians and the interests of big finance. Education has always been at the forefront of his interests (he even runs online courses on cannabis growing) so we started talking about how the production of information was changing.

Jorge explained recent shifts in the distribution of knowledge about cannabis. "I've been in publishing 34 years. The books worked for me because I had information no one else could get. Other people were making up stories about how to grow and I soon established myself as someone whose knowledge could be trusted". At first the internet added to the bad information out there but, there would be big discussions and lots of opinions and only a few people actually knew what they were talking about, but some of them were too complicated to understand".

"And once there is good information out there, everyone copies it. I did a search for a passage in one of my books, everyone had the same character string on their sites, they had all just copied it! That was 10 years ago. Now there are a lot more sources and good scientists are making more studies that provide accurate information. You no longer have to go to the

journal stacks in a library to find the latest research. You can get electronic journals at the touch of a button.

The big change is that right now there is some great stuff out there. For instance, www.projectcbd.org, is run by Fred Gardner, who was an editor and writer for the magazine *Scientific American*, has accurate information”.

“The information used to be sold. Now, in order to attract people to products, companies provide information for free to lead people towards sales”. Jorge saw this coming a long time ago. “Once Napster took off, changing the music industry, the digital consequences to publishing was inevitable – it was just a matter of time”.

So where, I wondered, does the slow decline of technical book publishing leave a person who has built a career from researching, writing and selling knowledge? As I explored this issue, Jorge revealed that his political analysis of the cannabis industry is just as good as his horticultural knowledge.

He explained that he saw different attitudes to business wherever he went. After extensive travelling around the world, and spending years living in different countries, he preferred a more social style. “I have been to trade fairs in America where I have not seen people in 10 years. They will shake hands and the next thing I know they will try to sell me something or tell me about a product. They did not ask one question about me as a person, they didn’t ask about my health, my family – just straight into a sales pitch, it even though we know each other. So, what if we are at a trade fair, I’m still a human being!”

“On the other hand, in Europe I see my friends and they say, “Oh how have you been?” Or they will talk socially about politics, their lives or something. Then I end up asking if they have a stand”. “Sure, do you want to come over?” But we socialise first. I like that much more, and then, if you do business, that’s great too”.

The “money first” attitude in the United States also brings other challenges.

According to Jorge, “The sector is going corporate. It’s the new dot com. So many businesses that have already gone public have not made any money and they are betting on what will come, what might happen. When business reality becomes inflated that is not necessarily so healthy”.

He continued, “Change is happening in the States at lightning speed. Whatever happens hinges upon the law. Before any specific law changes, there is already someone there to fill the potential business opportunity. As soon as banking changes in America, and investment is more straightforward, the sector is going to go through the roof. You can already have a public corporation. Once the United Nations and the United States agree to change the schedule restrictions on cannabis then people will be able to advertise, and the flood gates are open at that point. Legislation also restricts transportation through border controls, from state lines to national frontiers, but that too will change, causing lasting transformations in the cannabis economy”.

“The irony is that many of those who suffered through the criminalisation of cannabis are seen as a bit dirty by the new investors – they are kept at a distance. Yet, those activists built

everything that the financial investors are now putting their money in. The criminalisation they fought came at a huge cost”.

“Children growing up in Garberville, Humboldt County, California, if they haven’t had a policeman point a gun at them in a raid by the time, they are in High School then they really haven’t lived. Everybody has had a gun pointed at them by a cop.” Jorge sighs, exasperated by the brutality of the legal system “Why point guns at children? It doesn’t make sense!”

Jorge talks about the use of drugs legislation to control populations. He refers me to an interview in Harper’s Magazine with John Ehrlichman, an advisor to President Nixon on domestic policy during protests about the Vietnam war and the mobilisation of the civil rights movement. In 1994, Ehrlichman said:

“We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalising both heavily, we could disrupt those communities.

“We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes... and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course, we did.”

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/richard-nixon-used-america-s-war-on-drugs-as-excuse-to-target-anti-war-left-and-black-people-claims-a6948521.html>

The usually quiet demeanour of Jorge Cervantes disappears, he is moving towards me, visibly angry...

“I know hundreds of people whose lives have been changed or ruined by these lies about drugs. For example, one friend was running a grow store and went to prison for two years, he lost his family and his property. They prevented parents and children from seeing each other because of these lies. It’s unbelievable!”

Then he relaxes and laughs with that familiar Cervantes smile. “I got a message the other day from an old friend in the cannabis business. She said “I just gave a presentation to a bunch of white businessmen that want to exploit cannabis. Weird”. Then he reflected, “Well I am glad that they are getting into the business because it’s a great business to be in with lots of wonderful people, but I hope they learn to respect and not exploit the plant - they will get more from it that way. And you’ve got to respect the people too!”

“Now they have all sorts of products. Cannabis has been studied a lot more. Everyone is writing their doctoral thesis on it. There are tons of information. Yet, on the other side, you have politicians saying ‘This doesn’t work’ - What do they know?! The politicians want to collect as much money as they can, the corporations want to collect as much as they can, and the alcohol lobbies are afraid of it. In all the medicinal states, crime goes down. There’s no increase in vehicle crimes. People are consuming less alcohol in those states too. And then the drug companies have their interests. Cannabis could replace synthetic opioids. Its non-habit forming. It’s great for sleeping. It’s great for a lot of stuff’.”

We move away from politics to talk about and the growing CBD market, where Jorge has been working on product development.

Jorge continued, “I came across CBD about 40 years ago. We called it the ‘no-high’ plant. We didn’t know what it was, we had no idea. I didn’t know to go in the journals to look for CBD specifically. But it has been around forever, except it wasn’t desirable. The medicinal or therapeutic effects weren’t really known that much. They knew something about them, but better knowledge has developed in the last 15 years. Until then, those plants had little value.”

“Twenty-five years ago, I was in the Compassion Club in Commercial Drive, Vancouver, B. C., Canada, I met a native, American guy that came in”. Jorge said emotionally, “He was inaudible and shaking heavily. He rolled a joint about as big as my middle finger. It took him about 10 minutes to roll it, which was forever. Then, once he started smoking, every toke he took he trembled a little less. By the time he was two-thirds through, I could understand him perfectly. He was still a little ~~had~~ shaky by the time he finished, but he was talking almost like me. I couldn’t believe it. It was amazing. Now we are getting used to this effect, but back then it was like magic. That guy understood from his own cultural traditions to use cannabis for his medical condition, most of America has been late to realise this possibility”.

I asked Jorge about his opinions on a recent report from scientists in the UK who recommended that the cannabis industry, or governments regulating the industry, develop so-called “safer” cannabis with more balanced CBD:THC ratios. He had not read the report from the Institute of Psychiatry (a key UK government advisor on cannabis safety and, until this report, firmly against any sort of legalisation), but his insights got to the heart of the matter.

Jorge noted, “The biggest thing for some people is to get as wrecked as often as you can as fast as you can and have the strongest dope possible. There are different reasons for this, sometimes there is the social pressure comparable to how much weight you can press in the gym, other times its people going through difficult life experiences, like divorce or unemployment, and they just want to forget everything for a while, often it’s to do with age – I don’t smoke like I did 40 years ago. That’s one school of thought”.

“Then there is the more sophisticated palate that likes different flavours and different experiences. For example, at the So What! Cannabis Club, in Barcelona, there will be 10 grams of cannabis on the table which is free, and people will just roll up when they want to because its free and they don’t want to get super high because they won’t be able to have a nice conversation with somebody. So, it’s like you go to a bar you drink a beer, and you have another one over time, so you are not blotto. For me, it’s not much fun to be around someone who is super drunk or super stoned. If a lot of super stoned people want to hang out together then great let them do it, but it’s not for me anymore”.

Jorge continued, “But what you need to remember is we all have different bodies, some people need more THC or CBD to feel the effects. What the scientists don’t realise is that they cannot direct how people consume. A friend of mine gave this example, “How can a nun advise you to have a better sex life?” The nun cannot advise me how to have a better sex life because they don’t have sex. Some scientists are like that nun. Stop using the law to mess with the lives and bodies of ordinary people for political and economic gains or to satisfy the never-ending intellectual curiosities of scientists who have never used cannabis but who advise on its legality! Legalise cannabis and don’t look back!”

Jorge got up from his seat and began walking towards the trading floor of Spannabis he had a meeting with more people who needed his technical expertise. Just as he was going, I called

to him, “Are you ever going to write another book?” He turned and smiled. “Oh yeah, I still have a lot to say!”