

Books

John Sinclair

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a review of

Pot: A Handbook Of Marijuana, by John Rosevear (University) Books, \$4.95).

I first met John Rosevear when I was dealing grass in 1964. He came to my apartment with two notorious Ann Arbor dealers who had a bag of imported Panama Red, the finest grass to hit Detroit since I've been here. It seems they were in the habit of flying to Panama to pick up the grass themselves, to make sure nothing went wrong in the shipping. At that time Rosevear had just recently been turned on to the joys of marijuana smoking and he told me of the plot of pot he was growing in a vacant lot across from his house in Ann Arbor. He was already working on his book of grass, which he claimed ecstatically would turn on a lot of straight people to marijuana.

I was busted that fall for the first time and didn't see Rosevear for some time. When I saw him again he told me that he'd been busted himself for that plot of grass. It seems that the Ann Arbor narks had staked the field out for a number of weeks and would sit in a delivery truck for hours watching the field. The police finally broke into his house and confiscated a minuscule amount of the herb, enough to bring charges of illegal possession against John.

A victim of the U.S. legal scene, Rosevear first thought to challenge the marijuana statutes but was pressured out of it by lack of money and other resources and finally threw himself upon the mercy of the court in entering a plea of "Guilty."

He was sentenced to 1 to 10 years in the State Penitentiary and served over 7 months of the sentence before he was paroled in December, 1966. The book was brought up in court and actually seemed to be the prosecution's major target.

While researching the book and later as a result of his arrest Rosevear sought the counsel of Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Richard Alport, and through their help was able to place the marijuana book with University Books, publishers of *The Psychedelic Experience*, *The Egyptian Book of The Dead*, *The Psychedelic Reader*, and a catalog of occult and magical titles. He corrected the proofs immediately after being released from prison, waited through the Spring and Summer, and at last saw the book hit the stands last month. So far 10,000 copies have been sold, and the book is going into a second printing at this writing.

Pot: A Handbook of Marijuana is written for people who have had little or no contact with the herb, cannabis sativa, simple in structure and language, it reads like a college class paper on the subject, and at times is embarrassing in its simplicity. But I have to stress that it's not meant for heads, although, as Rosevear says, they will find a lot of useful information in the book, particularly in the section on "The Plant and How It Is Grown."

The book contains a wealth of pertinent quotations from the literature of marijuana, and it makes a strong case for legalization which will convince a lot of people who wouldn't otherwise have been convinced. The most startling quotation, taken from Alfred Lindesmith's *The Addict and the Law*, is on page 34:

"The gangster remarked: 'marijuana is the coming thing.' 'But,' I protested in surprise, 'Marijuana is not a habit-forming drug like morphine or heroin; and besides, it's too cheap to bother with.'

“He laughed, ‘You don’t understand. Laws are being passed now by various states against it, and soon Uncle Sam will put a ban on it. The price will then go up, and that will make it.’”

With cases in the courts now challenging the constitutionality of the marijuana statutes, with millions of heretofore unstoned Americans now turning to pot smokers, with legislation being prepared calling for the removal of marijuana from the narcotics statutes, with magazine and newspaper articles on the harmlessness of pot appearing everywhere, with television programs discussing the hitherto unspeakable subject of marijuana legalization, John Rosevear’s book will be a valuable tool for use in turning on straight people.

Pot is the book to give your parents, your teachers, your clergymen and congressmen. Let them read the story for themselves, and they’ll see just what has to be done. The book provides an excellent introduction to the very important marijuana subculture, and I’ll bet your friends will be asking you to turn them on after they’ve read it. They can’t help it.

And while they’re reading it, remind them that the gentle author, dear readers, spent seven months in the penitentiary and is now on strict parole as a result of smoking, growing, and writing this book on marijuana. Nothing makes the issue clearer than that.

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