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Always the Activist

From drug-running to business ownership, advocate Peggy Noonan has lived a lifetime of support and is proof that cannabis is an essential medicine.

by R. Scott Rappold



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Long before the phrase “medical marijuana” had entered the national dialogue over the illegal plant, Peggy Noonan knew it was good medicine.

It was the 1960s. The baby boomers, inspired by political unrest, an unpopular war and copious amounts of marijuana (among other illicit substances) were shaking the American establishment to its core.

“You say these things about what a difference it makes in people, but if you’re not sick, you don’t really have that experience of it. It’s extraordinary, the difference in how you feel, in terms of being able to eat and feeling better.”



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PEGGY NOONAN'S
PASSION FOR MEDICAL
CANNABIS ACTIVISM
KNOWS NO BOUNDS.

And Noonan regularly smuggled massive amounts of cannabis from Mexico in an effort to fuel the revolution.

“It was my first career out of college and that was in the context of turning on the world with weed, love and higher consciousness, and transforming the world,” says Noonan.

At 73, those days—and her two arrests—are ancient history, but Noonan is still spreading the love of cannabis. This time it’s legally, as founder and CEO of Copia, an Arizona-based cannabis food and concentrates company.

And she’s learned first-hand how powerful a medicine cannabis can be. She’s battling leukemia, which she already beat once with help from the plant, and plans to be around for a long time to continue to share her passion for cannabis.

“It certainly mellows people out, as opposed to war and anger and hatred,” she says. “You’re in a different dimension. You’ll find very few fights when somebody is stoned.”

Drug-running

A native New Yorker, she discovered cannabis in the 1960s hanging around Greenwich Village, then as now a haven for Bohemian types. She was introduced to the teachings of psychedelic guru Timothy Leary.

Noonan says she was a “borderline hippie,” but with a strong entrepreneurial spirit. So after graduating from Arizona State University, she elected not to use her degree in art education. She got into the ganja business, making regular cross-border excursions to bring back huge amounts of marijuana.

It wasn’t about making a profit, she says.

“We were always back then about making a difference in the world and changing things. I never really wanted to be a teacher, so I kind of fell into [cannabis], with the

purpose of making a difference in peoples’ lives,” she says.

When she was stopped at a checkpoint in 1969, Mexican authorities didn’t see the huge amount of cannabis in the car as altruistic at all. Three months in a Mexican jail followed.

Another bust in 1976 convinced her to seek a new line of work. She says authorities seized a literal ton of weed after federal agents followed her from Mexico to their “stash house.” Her ex-husband got 2.5 years in prison. She was pregnant at the time, which she credits for only receiving probation.

She worked as a drug counsellor. She bought and sold real estate in New York. She worked in interior design.

Then a funny thing happened: The country caught up with her views on cannabis as medicine.

Medical Marijuana

Arizona, late to the game compared to California, approved medical marijuana in 2010. At a conference, Noonan heard about all the opportunities of this new market, and having a friend who had obtained a license, decided to return to the industry after more than 30 years.

The brand she created, Copia, bills itself as “Arizona’s first original scratch-made cannabis kitchen.” They’re most-known for their OGeez! infused gummies. It was a dream come true for Noonan.

But life had other plans. In 2017 she was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia, a type of cancer of the bone marrow and blood cancer that has a 27 percent average survival rate after five years, according to findings from the National Cancer Institute.

While the chemotherapy put the cancer into remission, she credits cannabis for getting her through the process. Copia’s homeopathic cannabis tincture oil, among other products, helped spur her appetite and cope with the side effects of the treatment. Perhaps more importantly, cannabis lifted her spirits in her darkest hours.

“You say these things about what a difference it makes in people, but if you’re not sick, you don’t really have that experience of it. It’s extraordinary, the difference in how you feel, in terms of being able to eat and feeling better,” she says.

“It creates a lightness of being. You start to feel better, lighter.”

She was pronounced cancer-free in 2018, but the disease returned the following year. She is currently being treated in Texas, running her business remotely.

And business is booming. Arizona voters approved adult use last fall, so as she sees it, the sky is the limit. She hopes to someday take the OGeez! brand national.

“We’re just at the tip of the iceberg. From my point of view, passion leads and money follows. It’s not the money that interests me as much as making a difference for people and developing different products that can do that.”

It’s a powerful incentive to still be around when her treatment ends.

“I’m going to get to the other side of this and get rid of it. I’ve got too much to do.” **HT**

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