

‘A Medic in the Culture Wars’



LYNNE BARNES, RN, BSN (A.K.A. GEO), a former oncology nurse at UCSF, was a mainstay at the San Francisco Cannabis Buyers Club. This what she said at the celebration of Dennis’s life March 11.

Dennis earned a purple heart in the culture wars. Dennis was a medic in the culture wars. Dennis was an amazing, compassionate human being. And, yes, I was one of those nurses in the 1980s who would close the door and help, in this case mostly cancer patients, smoke pot to quell their nausea when they would have chemo.

First Club
They took cabs from the hospital to Dennis’s home, hoping for marijuana. After he paid their cab drivers, they came inside, smoked in his living room.
He brought plates of spaghetti, baskets of garlic bread, bunches of grapes and bananas, bowls of vanilla ice cream...
after the THC quelled the queasiness, made them hungry again for the first time in weeks.
No one stuck wires to their skin or examined their urine; without a microscope everyone could see them eat, stop dying of starvation.
They would laugh, lying right there next to Death, fall into a deep, healing sleep, get up, smoke, keep eating, live years longer than the ones before them.
—Lynne Barnes

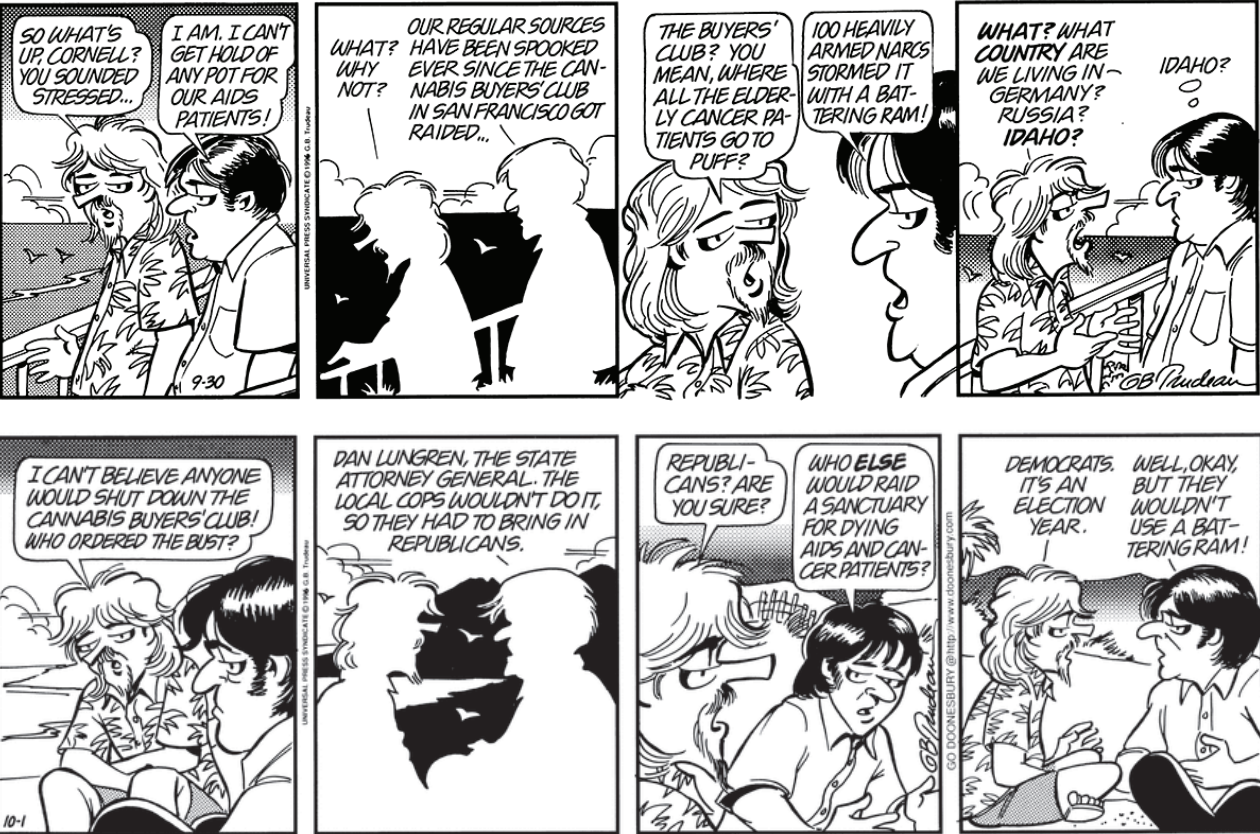
I had left a communal setting that I had been in for many years and Dennis invited me to come and help him. I was scared to death! I’m not an activist, I’m an introvert! I can close doors in hospital rooms and let people smoke, but is Dan Lungren gonna-bust me?
Dan Lungren did bust into the homes of AIDS patients at the Cannabis Club. We were scared, but it was also a heady time because we had press from all over the world. We had *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Nightline*, *The Times* of London, *Der Spiegel* in Germany. It was a cultural upheaval, a tornado that was happening.
And Dennis was our rock and stood his ground, and spoke bravely, that medic, that warrior in the culture wars... and he said *the emperor wears no clothes!* He said: on the one hand the emperor is growing pot and giving it to medical patients. On the other hand the emperor is arresting patients and putting them in jail. And Dennis said *No more!*
We reached the epitome of a high place in the culture wars when Garry Trudeau called us and John Entwistle filled him with the ideas of what was going on and I sent him a whole bunch of materials, and then there we were in *Doonesbury*! Now that was the pinnacle! We were in *Doonesbury*!

I want to share with you a letter that Dennis received. And this letter is from Every Patient. It’s from an Everyman who happened to be the nephew of the president of the United States, Jimmy Carter. William Carter Spann eventually lost his battle and passed, but for a brief time this was what his life was like and this is what he wrote to Dennis about it. This is June 10, 1996:
Dennis,
Thank you. Since I started coming to the Cannabis Buyers’ Club I’ve kicked heroin, I’ve gotten into a methadone program, and I’m in good standing with the parole department. And, I’ve quit drinking— a beast I’ve never been able to cope with. I now eat well and I’m gaining weight. Above all, I am not so consumed with my own discomfort that I’m a clod in everyone’s way. I’m doing some useful and positive things in AIDS outreach and I feel good.
For your fight on my behalf, I am sincerely grateful.
William Carter Spann, Client

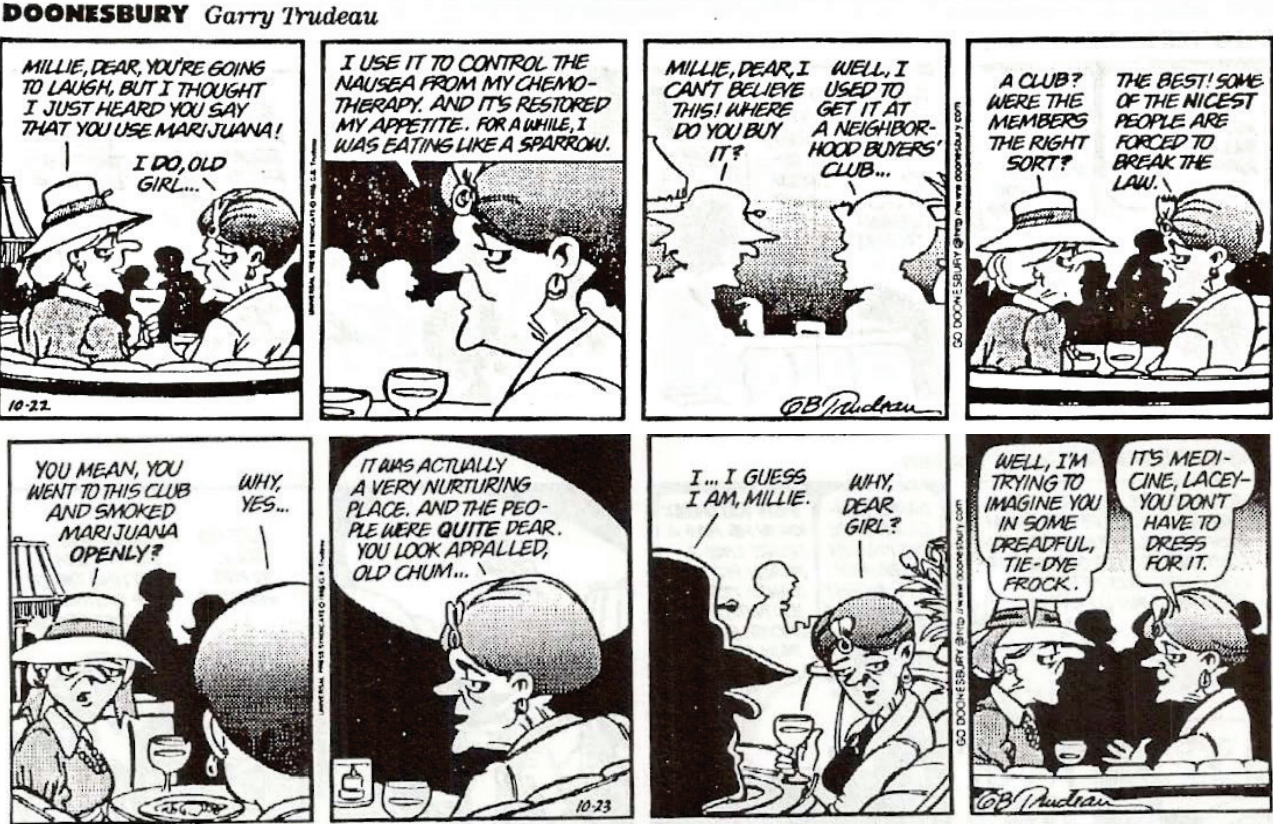
Weedmaps
supports freedom of speech
and O’Shaughnessy’s says thanks.

Trudeau’s ‘toons turned the tide

Opening salvo —Doonesbury strips kicked off the last week of September, 1996:



Response to Lungren —Strips that ran October 22-23 (shortly before Election Day):



Saying Goodbye

At the celebration of Dennis Peron’s remarkable life March 11, 2018. Photos by John Entwistle

