

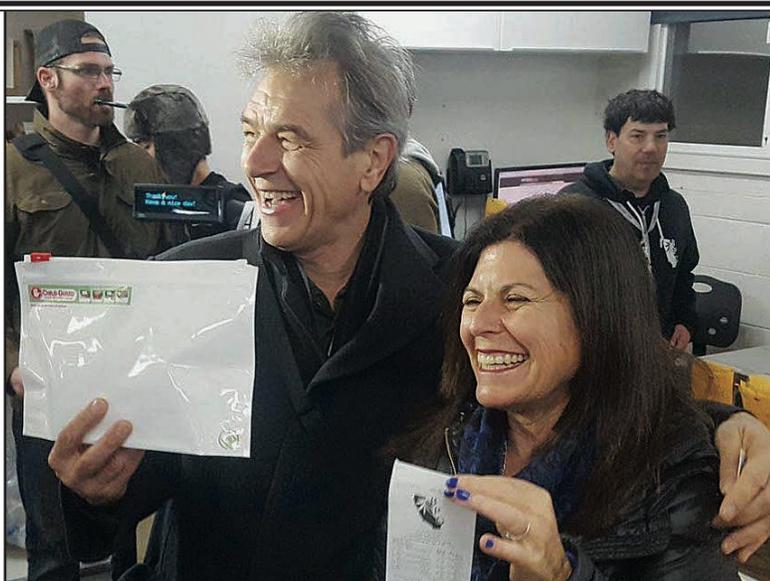
Making like the Phoenix in 2019

Jumping out of bed at 4:20 in the morning is not the way we normally start off a year, but 2018 saw us in the car and on the road to the Berkeley Patients Group before five o'clock. New Year's was the first day for California adults to buy legal cannabis, and we were honored by Berkeley Patients Group to make the first non-medical adult sale and pay the new cannabis tax. It was going on at shops all over the state but we were the very first, by just a fraction of a minute — our receipt is stamped 5:59 AM. We legally purchased three, pre-rolled joints, to honor our late friend, Jack Herer, and all activists who worked so hard to make this happen.

It was a year of whirlwind events and ongoing progress for cannabis, as momentum builds on the foundation of these decades of hard work. We started the year on a high note but federal AG Sessions took only three days to threaten to put the kibosh on our win. His fizzled effort shows how far things have come and allowed us time to spend on other things that needed attention.

Changing times and circumstances

Since legalization in California, there's not much demand for Chris' court defense work. That's great news! We always knew his legal expert gig was a bubble for us, so we decided to wait and see what opportunities would arise while enjoying some unrushed time. Chris got to keep up theLeafOnline.com website, play guitar and work on the house and yard. We got a vibration platform and two mini-trampolines so we can both jog in place at the same time. We went to cannabis industry events, local town council and county supervisor meetings and state level functions and things just kept cropping up. We hit up yoga and Pilates, took walks and dined with friends after class, etc. Same race but a different pace.



Rise and shine: It might have been 6 AM, but we were all smiles as we made the first legal adult cannabis purchase in California.

Sharing cannabis on a higher plane

We've always held that it's important to have a sense of respect, awe and community with cannabis and not treat it as just a commodity. Over 20 years ago, Chris defined *Cantheism* as a common, non-denominational sacramental use of cannabis. Michael Gosney asked him to speak on cannabis spirituality and sacramental practice at the Conscious Life Expo in February. After that, we decided to explore the practice and soon hosted a cannabis spirituality gathering with Michael, Gail and Mike, Jaene, Mitchell, and others that became the first of our *Cannamaste* circles. Swami and Nikki came to an April circle and have since become good friends and allies in manifesting these events.

Our mid-summer circle drew 30 people, ringed our back yard and required multiple joints. We began to consider how to accommodate bigger groups and empower the growing interest in Cantheist gatherings, so we produced a postcard explaining the practice and how to participate or host a circle, see cantheism.org.

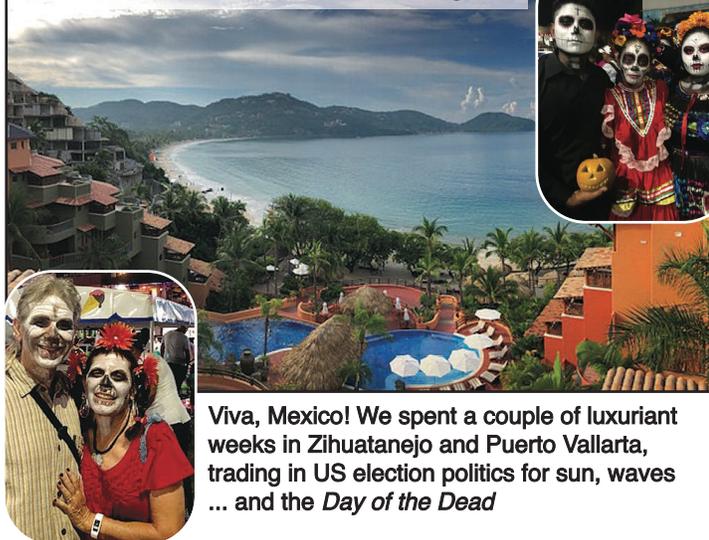
December's Emerald Cup was a culmination of our *Cannamaste* practice, with another panel on Cannabis Spirituality that ended up in a sacramental ceremony. At least 100 people joined the experience. It was quite powerful and we are looking to expand on this.

Cannabis / Drug War reform activism

After a few cannabis business conferences, Dion invited us to San Diego and hosted a group of hempsters at Earth Day. Dolores Huerta, David Bronner and Chris spoke on hemp and there was a demonstration of flame resistant building materials, a fashion show by our friend Summer and other hempy things. Chris did a few interviews, including a potential Netflix documentary. Around the same time, we were featured in a Bakken Museum (MN) exhibit



Mikki demonstrates the chillum-style "safe smoking" technique with a sacramental joint. Say *Cannamaste*, inhale and pass it on.



Viva, Mexico! We spent a couple of luxuriant weeks in Zihuatanejo and Puerto Vallarta, trading in US election politics for sun, waves ... and the *Day of the Dead*

on plant medicines. Cannabis News Network released a six part video series on our 30 years in cannabis reform. (Each one is only about four or five minutes long, at theleafonline.com/c/lifestyle/2018/04/power-couple-pot-profile/)

We were invited to speak in SF at the *How Weird Festival* in a zone dubbed “Green Alley” and Chris spoke at an Ethical Resource Development event in Santa Barbara. Mikki wrote a retrospective article for merryjane.com, “What the Slow Arc of Pot Legalization Looks Like From the Activist Frontlines” and Chris also wrote for them. When he was signing books at the NCIA conference, Chris was interviewed by a Chinese TV news agency on China’s historic and modern ties to hemp (*ma*).

Amy Povah, whose photo graced the cover of our book, *Shattered Lives*, stayed with us when she came to speak at UC Berkeley about electronic monitoring as an oppressive bail measure that disproportionately hurts the poor .

We contributed photos of cannabis activists and events from the past 30 years as part of an exhibit that ran for several months in Oakland and we were involved in the Night of Remembrance at the gallery, using photos and stories to introduce modern activists to a few of the fallen heroes who went before.

We started sorting through the piles of garage stuff with Alethia to get hemp and movement items together, some for Don Wirtshafter’s archive. This is a work in process. It’s time to get more serious and start moving things out.

Chris participated in a series of Hemp Workshops that took us to Monterey one day, and the next day we flew to Seattle Hempfest to moderate panels at the Hemposium Stage and whip up the crowds at other stages.

In September, we went north to Mendocino County to see Amanda Reiman and visit Flow Kana’s impressive processing / distribution center. Next we visited Swami and Nikki at the Swami Select farm and retreat, Turtle Creek, where a crew was trimming branches from massive trees and reminded us to check in on our own giant oaks.

Our home county doesn’t license any cannabis stores, so in April and May we joined Contra Costa NORML activists at the Board of Supervisors seeking retail access. Chris emceed the stage at a Cannabis Education Day event in Concord that featured a talk by Alice O’Leary and panels with local officials and candidates. Our goal was both to educate and to rally local support for licensed sales. We got a good reception at the state house when we went to Sacramento for the CANORML /ASA Lobby Day.

The New West Summit returned to Oakland where we were to be honored for our activism by Ophelia Chong. Unfortunately, hotel workers went on strike just as the conference was to begin — obviously not the event’s fault, but it caused a lot of problems due to the timing. We felt we could not cross the picket lines, but did go to an off site party where our work was recognized; a lot of fun, but the new location had terrible acoustics!

When Canada legalized cannabis sales in October, CBC Radio interviewed Chris. We also were guests on Paul Stanford’s cable TV show in Portland. In December, Chris flew out and testified at a trial in Arizona that kept him away for four days but he got to see his old anti-nuclear buddy, James, and connect with local activists. His client, Mr. Valentin, was acquitted of the charges.

We hosted a string of houseguests who came to town for the Emerald Cup, Josephine and Mike from Florida, Dion from San Diego and Hana from the Czech Republic, who works with hemp and at the UN drug policy level.

The year ended with two big federal wins. First came the signing of the *Farm Bill*, legalizing industrial hemp exactly three decades after Chris formed Business Alliance for Commerce in Hemp in 1988. Second came the *First Step Act*, giving relief from some federal drug penalties. “Baby step” is more like it, but it is a start that came more than 23 years after we created Human Rights and the Drug War to support sentencing reform.

Domestic tranquility and travel adventures

Chris’ life changed in an unexpected way when he stepped onto a vibration platform. He’s had chronic back pain since a late-1980s injury and took the claims for a ten-minute vibration with a bit of skepticism. A half hour later, he was pain free lasting well into the next day. We got one and have both been using it daily, regularly or as needed. The cumulative relief is amazing.

Five years after her mastectomy, Mikki finally picked a San Francisco tattoo artist who specializes in botanicals and does freehand work for the tattoo on her reconstructed breast. Her lifelong friend, Marci, came to be here and support Mikki during the process. She now has a little nature scene on her chest, with a butterfly, flowers, forget-me-not vines and cannabis leaves and is happy to show this artwork, upon request. Mikki finished the tattoo about the same time she completed her five-year pre-

scription to Tamoxifen. She is very happy with the result and says it makes her feel more whole again.

Spring saw Chris rework the irrigation lines so we don't have to ask people to water flora when we are out of town. By the fall, he was busy gardening, landscaping and creating access trails along the steep hillside behind the house to reach and treat the oak tree. We hired an arborist to appraise the grove and he saw four problems, a weather related leaf fungus, excessive dead wood and needed trimming, warning signs of sudden oak death and buried crown roots. It took a few weeks to get tree trimmers in, but they did a great job and sprayed the bottoms of five massive tree trunks with a compound to forestall but not cure the SOD infection. Chris is still digging out the roots. It's been costly and a bit depressing, but we are doing everything we can to save these beautiful, old trees that sold us on the house in the first place.



Then we went to Zihuatanejo, Mexico for our goodbye to the timeshare era, since our contract was only for 30 years; and too long, at that. We're glad to be done with it. The room was really pretty but what thrilled us most were the \$10 beach massages (\$15 facials) plus tip and celebrating *Dia de los Muertos*, the Day of the Dead. We learned more about the festival and enjoyed painting our faces and watching the parade. Streets were lined with *ofrendas*, small altars that honor those who went before, with favorite foods and other things they loved in life. The animated movie *Coco* does a good job of explaining it. We met some great people and saw beautiful beaches; the ocean water was wonderful and the housekeepers taught Mikki how to make towel animals.

Next came Puerto Vallarta, where our timeshare experience began in 1987. They had sculptures, *ofrendas* and giant, *papier mache* skeleton statues set up along the beach and *malacon*. Massages were more expensive — \$20 and up — but we still got two. It disappointed Mikki that our ground floor room had no view, but it was convenient to beach, pools and restaurant and we enjoyed its gorgeous little beach. We still love the town and its beautiful sunsets. We visited Patricia, the Hemp Duchess, in Bucerias at her lovely home and nearby ranch and may want to take up her offer to stay there sometime. We were in Mexico for the US elections and missed all of the insanity here. We did feel better about coming home after a Blue Wave hit and several more marijuana ballot initiatives passed around the country.

Chris took a pen and notebook to Mexico and handwrote the first 60 pages of a memoir but only got as far as high school. He's continued to work on them upon our return. Too bad there are so few photos or anything else to help sort out the details. Most of his early memorabilia were



Visiting with Norris and Conrad family members.

destroyed by a fire in the 1970s that wiped out the "Kozmic Koop" where he had stored his things.

Somehow, we both ended up with *Plantar Faciitis*, stressed tendons from too much walking on flat surfaces. So we got three point insoles and are working on it.



Finding time to share with family and friends

We visited our LA friends in February when we were in town for the Conscious Life Expo. Afterwards, we went to David Walley's Hot Springs in Nevada with Mary and Banitta. Local friends Ali and Hank got married on Valentine's Day but his health declined and he passed away a week after Thanksgiving, so it was a very special treat to share this celebration of their love.

We had another wild and wonderful party for Chris' "Medicare, Here I Come" birthday, with weather warm enough to eat on the deck and play guitars outside before the cool of evening drove the jam indoors. Robbie and Lucky visited from Thailand to bring us some kid energy — Nova had a blast playing musical instruments and running through the house. We actually got a lot of kid energy, especially in the last few days of the year when Azure, Makenna and Bella discovered how much fun it is to play with Uncle Chris. Things got wild.

We spent Mothers Day in Portland with Mom and the Conrads We visited the Delta 9 House, had a talk and book signing at the Flight Lounge and hung out with activists and friends, including a friend from Mikki's elementary school days. Marci and Tom took us for a walk through Reed College grounds and a nearby rhododendron garden. We went to see Mom again after Seattle Hempfest and, this time, unfortunately, she was in a rehabilitation facility after she fell and broke her femur, so we couldn't take her out and show her around.

We went sailing on the Bay with Patti and Jan and celebrated Swami's 75th birthday in Golden Gate Park. Sol and Shanti dropped in from Australia, Marci and Tom visited us on their ways to and from LA, Jennifer dropped in a few times from Hawaii, Mary Pat, Danielle and others stayed over and Mikki met her long-lost cousin, Roberta, wife and son, whom Shelley found via Ancestry.com.

Suzanne treated us to tickets for a Doobie Brothers and Steely Dan concert and Steely Dan blew us away with strong performances and jazzy horns. We had a little family reunion at cousin Tami and Travis' 40th birthday party. Mikki's LA family and cousins came to town for the bash and the next day we hosted a brunch to introduce Roberta and her family to more of the extended family.

Adam held a reunion concert in LA for his old (not being ironic here) high school/ college rock band. The band members showed they still had it, but they needed more cow bells. Mikki helped organize a pot luck with friends including her ESL teacher friends. It was fun reconnecting. While in town, we got to see Andrea and Alan's new beach house in Oxnard with Dolly and Will and met two new nieces, Randi and Meredith's daughter, Dylan, and Shelby and Michael's Olivia. And the babies just keep coming — two more are due early this year!

It was back to Portland after Thanksgiving to see siblings, Mom, Marci and Tom. The weather was cold but we bundled her up for a few walks and to get those pancakes Mom had been waiting for. We had a birthday party for her at Olive Garden and got together with a few of Marci and Tom's friends for a Chanukah *latke* potluck.

US, global and local politics interject

We went to San Francisco for the second global Women's March with the Norris-Alvarez crew, to stand up for truth, justice, decency and the planet. After that, "Town Hall" meetings with Congressmembers and, after the Parkland High School massacre, the national March Against Gun Violence to call for sensible gun regulations to protect school children and remind politicians that we do care and we *vote*.

We endorsed our long-time political ally Judy Appel in her bid for state Assembly and hosted a fundraiser. On Primary Day, we held signs at BART and passed out info to help get out the vote but she didn't win.

Twice this year we left town and came home to smoky skies and toxic air from the Mendo and Camp Fires, the biggest and most deadly fires in state history, respectively. We were told not to go outside for weeks, until rain hit. Bad as it was for us, we were lucky compared to those who lost homes to tsunamis, fires, storms and extreme weather. Global warming anyone? It's late to act.

We were outraged when Sessions ordered children to be taken from their parents who cross the border for political asylum. We protested at a local detention cen-

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Free cannabis giveaway at the courthouse steps and protesting against Trump taking kids from their parents.



ter and in the streets against this heinous policy. We can't stand Trump or GOP policies, so we donated, wrote postcards, supported the loyal opposition and hope the Dems act on legalization and other good causes.

Wrapping up the present

At year's end, we were running around like crazy until Christmas. First came a burst of court work, then our Adult Holiday Cannabis Giveaway on the courthouse steps. We did that to protest the lack of stores to sell cannabis in our county and celebrate the fact that any California adult *can* grow and give it away. See Mikki's Facebook page for a video of the experience. Finally, the Emerald Cup circle. What fun! It feels good to be legal!

This year we hope to make like a Phoenix, rise from the ashes and up our financial game again, especially if the stock market eats up more of our savings. Hopefully we do and it doesn't, but if you hear anything interesting for us and a good fit, let us know. There's a big problem with illegal dumping in our neighborhood, so Mikki might go after that as a local organizing cause. She got Chris an Ancestry.com DNA kit, so maybe we'll meet some long-lost cousins on his side of the family. We'll let you know.

Meanwhile, we're hoping to catch up with friends like you and maybe see more of you in 2019. An even longer version of this letter is posted online at MikkiAndChris.com. Here's wishing you a happy, healthy and hempy year!

— Chris Conrad & Mikki Norris • 510-275-9311

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