

ABDULLAH: This podcast is for adults 21 years of age or older. We talk about cannabis history and advertise cannabis products. If you're not 21 come back when you are

AUDIO LOGO: Spoke Media.

ABDULLAH: Hey, how's it going folks? It's Abdullah

BEAN: And Bean

ABDULLAH: And welcome back for yet another episode of great moments in wheat history on this show. My partner Bean and I who are both cannabis journalists and media makers go through one of the more fascinating points in the long, long, long history of cannabis. This episode is actually part two in a two parter about Tom Forcade, the founder of High Times Magazine, so if you haven't yet heard part one, I suggest you go listen to that first and then come back and pick it up here with part two. When we last left off, Tom facade had led a crazy life. He had been involved in the underground press. He had been involved as a drug smuggler and he had been brought up on federal charges and he had not yet started the magazine that we know him for today being, I'm imagining we're going to get into that today.

BEAN: As you said when we left off, he had been federally indicted for a plot to firebomb the Republican national convention. Ah, something I think, you know, we can all relate to mistakes you make and your you

ABDULLAH: yeah. You know, a young, the younger wild, wild in heart, you know what I'm saying? ,

BEAN: Uh who among us hasn't been indicted on federal charges. Uh, and of course these charges, it's like so much that's thrown at him are bullshit and they don't stand up to scrutiny. Uh, but at the time him and his girlfriend Cindy, his partner in crime, his partner in all these creative endeavors, uh, we're facing like 20 years each. They managed to win an acquittal at trial. And uh, I'll just, I'll just repeat this quote from Tom to, to reset us in the story. He said, I had just been acquitted of an explosive charge and I went into a long period of self examination to determine what I wanted to do next. The movement was over and I needed something to keep from killing myself out of boredom and so aided by many tanks of nitrous oxide. I came up with High Times,

ABDULLAH: High Times was a huge part of my understanding of cannabis as a young kid. And getting older and getting the, actually have an article published in the magazine a few times was an amazing tree for me and I really didn't know, uh, the amazing history of its founder.

BEAN: And you know, for me, uh, I was a High Times staffer for 10 years. It is one of the greatest experiences of my life. It was an honor and a privilege to be a part of it. Um, and I'm really happy to be here with you to tell this story. So I think

ABDULLAH: With that,

BEAN: We're ready

ABDULLAH: For another

BOTH: Great Moment in Weed History

AUDIO LOGO: Spoke Media.

ABDULLAH: Alrighty. So Bean as I get this joint rolled up, why don't you bring us back into this story.

BEAN: All right. But I've got to do a little something first. Was that, do you remember me? Uh, kinda telling you there'd be a little surprise at the end of part one.

ABDULLAH: That's right. You did mention a surprise. What's going on? I'll be right back. Oh shit. Oh shit. I love surprises. Good ones. Anyway,

BEAN: Abdullah, let me introduce you to Rex Wiener. He is a, was a very close friend of Tom Forcade. He was foundational to the founding of high times magazine. Wow. Had many adventures in publishing. Uh, his writings appeared in vanity fair, the Paris review, the New Yorker, LA Weekly. He, uh, wrote an episode of Miami Vice. He's a screenwriter. Uh, and really I just thrilled to have somebody here who knew Tom Forcade and can really talk to us from that personal experience. Thanks for coming.

REX WIENER: Well, thank you being and thank you. I've done that.

ABDULLAH: Yeah, it is. My pleasure. Racks. Welcome to the great moments in wheat history studio. Since I was a kid, high times was a huge part of my understanding of cannabis culture. I moved around a lot no matter how isolated I was. Uh, I could always go to the sort of all records store and pick up high times and look at weed porn, which is really what appealed to me.

REX WIENER: Well, I'm doing that. It's funny that you say weed porn. You know, when Tom first sat down with me in, uh, gosh, I guess it was 72, 73 and said he wanted to do a Playboy for the counterculture audience, a stoned version of Playboy. And one of the, the features he said would be a centerfold except instead of a nude woman, which was getting old at that time. Well, maybe not anyway, instead of a nude woman, there would be the most beautiful, most luscious, the most desirable [inaudible] bud

ABDULLAH: Hell yeah.

REX WIENER: And uh, I listened to Tom and I thought, well, that's an interesting idea at Tom. You know, I'm a magazine all about weed. It's worth a try.

ABDULLAH: Yeah. And up until that point, had you been in publishing or journalism, anything like that?

REX WIENER: I was the, um, I was managing something called the Underground Press Syndicate. Ah, and um, as I'm sure you talked about in part one, it was a syndicate of, or an, uh, a loose organization of underground newspapers all around the country and around the world.

BEAN: How did you first come into the orbit of Tom for, and what were your early impressions of him?

REX WIENER: We were putting together the New York ACE and we had, uh, an office on 16th street, but we had no office equipment, no chairs, no desks, no furniture, nothing. And somebody said to me, well, you should go see Tom Forcade. His office is just a block away and he's got a whole bunch of desks from some source. And so we, um, I went over to his loft on 17th street and the minute I walk in, I knew this is, this is somebody unusual.

REX WIENER: Everyone was living in a tent in the middle of the Luft. Huh? There was a whole sort of commune or tribe or something there.

BEAN: Those tents are now \$3,200 a month,

REX WIENER: Airbnb. Right. And so, uh, so I met Tom there and uh, he said, sure, take whatever you want. And there was a whole stack of desks going up to the ceiling. And, um, that's how we furnished our first, uh, office of the New York case. But in the process, um, there was something else unusual in that loft, which was a, a, a big tank of laughing gas, nitrous,

ABDULLAH: Nitrous, hippy crack.

REX WIENER: Tom offered me a hit. Yeah. We just, you know, uh, and so we had a few laughs as it were. And uh, over the, uh, next, uh, few months and years we became very good friends. He was a committed political activist of the most anarchistic sort T. um, he really believed if there's a left and a right, he was outside of all of that, he tried to be a third force, unpredictable, uncontrollable, totally self contained and autonomous and unique and original.

BEAN: What you said reminds me of this book. He was very influenced by called agents of chaos. And it talked about how there's three forces just as you say, the dominant force that's in charge. There's the counterculture force that is against it, but also linked to it. And then there's chaos. And uh, from everything I know from studying his life, he was for chaos and he thought chaos was a prerequisite to any kind of real change. Otherwise, if the dominant force is overthrown by the opposition, the opposition is just going to become the dominant force. And we

see that all the time. And he felt that chaos had to come first. And I know that agents of chaos gave it the name to an organization that you were involved with Rex.

REX WEINER: Well, true enough. And let's give credit to the great science fiction writer Norman Spinrad, who was the author of Agent of Chaos. And I was lucky enough to do an introduction to an edition of his novel, uh, in which I tell the story about how Tom introduced me to this book and this whole philosophy. And I decided, well, I was inspired by Tom's own example. He was called to deliver testimony to a, a federal commission on obscenity. Are you aware of this?

ABDULLAH: Yup. Uh, so we heard about this in the last episode, but I would definitely like to hear from you.

REX WIENER: Right. Well, we were all in awe and admiration of Tom's bold and accurate testimony at this federal commission on obscenity in which he said it all by throwing a pie in the face of this commissioner. I believe it was the first political pieing in history.

ABDULLAH: Man, that's so dope. And have there been more pieings since then?

REX WIENER: Well, yes, I made sure of that because what I did was I put together an organization called The Agents of PI kill Unlimited. Not to stretch a point, but you've heard of ISIS.

ABDULLAH: I have

REX WEINER: OK we were icing.

BEAN: We feel he'll be here all week folks.

ABDULLAH: All right, so I totally so I see why Bean brought you not only for your wealth of knowledge and your participation in history, but because you have a pension for ponds,

REX WIENER: The Agents of Pie Kill. As soon as we launched it became a widespread phenomenon. We had up to a, I guess at our peak a dozen agents and a lot of contrasts. We were making good money and everyone was well trained. By the way I, you know, this wasn't any kind of, you know, bullshit cause what I was really doing, and I'll confess this now, I was training people for the time when we would all have to go up in the Hills. This was the time when Nixon was in charge and you know, Watergate was still a third rate burglary. And we had this feeling that a fascism was going to rule the land. And

BEAN: Rex, excuse me, but I live in 2019. I have no feeling of reference for the ideal ones you're talking about and you're saying a repressive authoritarian government is, is ratcheting up, uh, the move towards a kind of fascist dictatorship. And in America,

ABDULLAH: Imagine that

REX WIENER: You wouldn't be suggesting that the, uh, agents of pike, he'll be revived.

BEAN: I certainly not in that context.

ABDULLAH: Yeah. Now this is like, so yeah, it truly is you guys are PISIS

REX WIENER: Abdullah gets the prize.

ABDULLAH: You guys are seriously it training. I mean like I would be really curious to see footage from this training camp where you guys are training per pie head. Oh, like those grainy black and white. It's probably on file at the FBI. And what, what did Tom think of all this? What did Tom for side feel about agents of Pikeville?

REX WIENER: Well, Tom was cool, but he had already moved on to his, his life's work, which was behind the scenes that had times, he was one of the pioneers of the trade routes from Columbia. You know, he was a businessman, uh, an import export guy. And uh, so he admired what, what we're doing and, and gave it his blessing.

BEAN: So after the indictment, and he was acquitted by Tom's description, he went back to New York. He was pretty depressed. He didn't really know what to do next. Nixon had just been reelected and he's kind of in this downward funk. It's December, 1972 and you show up at his apartment trying to cheer him up.

REX WIENER: I said, Tom, look at this story in the newspaper. There's a, a ship, a cruise ship going to watch the last Apollo moonshot, and it's leaving from port here in New York city and onboard there were going to be top scientists from NASA, top, top science fiction writers like Robert Heinlein and Isaac Asimov.

BEAN: Wow.

REX WIENER: And celebrities, like Hugh Downs who had the tonight show and Norman Mailer, the author Katherine and Porter who wrote ship of fools. I said, Tom, look, this is a ship of fools. We should go because there are all of these other reporters, media invited to go for free. But he looked at the story and they immediately understood what was going on. He said, dig it man. It's the elites. They're planning to leave the earth after they've fucked it up and they're going to settle in elite communities on the Moon and Mars. And that was Tom's insight and we were smoking some really dynamite weed at the time.

REX WIENER: And so I said, of course he had Tom, that's exactly what this is. We've got to get on that ship and report for the underground press. Why exclude us? And so, uh, we gathered a group of friends and had a little, went down to the, uh, the dock and, uh, there was the ship, it

was the SS Stotten Dom, one of the Dutch America cruise liners and beautiful fancy ship. The horn blew and the announcement came, you know, everyone not going on the cruise, a time to go ashore. And everyone got off the ship, all of our friends, and there was Tom and me and we watched as the skyline of New York slipped off into oftentimes and suddenly I turned to, I stowed away really doing this. We stowed away,

BEAN: Okay,

REX WIENER: Holy shit. And so, um, you know, basically all we had was what we were wearing. And, uh, I got to know Tom pretty well. He, uh, confided to me something that few other people knew, which was that he had been diagnosed as a manic depressive, a bipolar, and so he had medication for that, which I thought, well, this is very honest and you know, thank you for letting me know. And so are you taking your medication? Well, it turns out that Tom left his medication on shore and instead he had a whole pocket full of pills, powders and potions, uppers, downers, LSD.

ABDULLAH: Oh boy.

REX WIENER: A little bindle of Coke, some meth. And uh, he proceeded to take all of that stuff and went every which way. Whoa. So after the the moon launch, which was, you know, probably the high point of the whole thing, he started to go South onto the shit.

REX WIENER: So there I am stuck with this super depressed guy. Now there was a reporter from the New York times onboard, Tom Buckley, and he interviewed us and we allowed him to interview us with the provision that he doesn't file the story until we're off the ship. So after the moon launch, Tom and I are on deck and we look over the railing and there's Tom Buckley, the New York Times reporter in a dinghy, uh, you know, heading back to Miami. And we went, Oh no, because we knew what was going to happen and sure enough, the next day it came out in the New York times that there was this cruise and all of these people,

BEAN: I can actually read the New York times account, as published, December 12th, 1972 the New York times reports that were also two uncounted free loaders or stowaways on board. These were Tom Forcade, the leader of the Zippies and Rex Weiner, the editor of the New York ACE and underground publication, the two young men who said they thought they deserved a vacation after the rigors of fomenting demonstrations that the political conventions in Miami beach set themselves up in a comfortable cabin, which they vacated early each morning after making the births and tidying up. They spent their days sunning themselves accepting drinks from the many passengers who were in on their secret and hinting broadly that they had some really spectacular devil tree up their sleeves. Quote. We were thinking about opening the C Cox said, Mr Forcade, when we realized that we didn't have any seats in the lifeboats, still undiscovered and deciding that to push their luck, they left the ship in St Thomas on Saturday. Uncertain as to how they would return to New York.

REX WIENER: Well, if it's in the New York Times Bean, then it must be true.

BEAN: No, I want to, I want to pick up Tom's story after the stowaway incident. As I understand the story, he and Cindy go down to Florida for a bit of the winter and he is on the one hand checking in on his smuggling operations and on the other hand starting to really put ink to paper on, come up with a plan for High Times and then he returns to New York. He's all excited about this idea. They put this thing out on a shoestring. They have really high standards. They get some ads from the paraphernalia companies of the day, like your easy Widens, your grow, your own mushroom kits. But they hit a problem. No distributor in the country wants to carry a magazine called High Times that has a weed centerfolds and teaches you how to grow, smuggle, sell and consume a schedule one narcotic.

ABDULLAH: Yeah. Right. So I mean, of course we know that High Times ended up being in a certain type of store, but who was the first to do that? Because obviously weed is far more illegal, uh, in the time that we're talking about,

REX WEINER: Well, Abdullah. Uh, they were called head shops.

ABDULLAH: Right. Okay. Gotcha. Every town had one

BEAN: And then I know another strategy that Tom facade had to distribute the magazine in the early days was he had all these dealers who would pick up weight from him and he said, okay, you take such and such amount of pounds, that's all good with that. You have to buy this many magazines and you can flip them for twice as much. And apparently all the dealers at first were like, I don't sell magazines. What the fuck? You know? And then they all came back and were like, okay, I'll have the same amount of weed and I need twice as many magazines. And that's like when they knew it was going to be a hit with the intended audience.

REX WIENER: It was a truly independent, uh, publication. And uh, yeah, the dealers and, and the boutique owners who became over the years, the place where you could go buy high times along with your bong and your glow in the dark poster. It was a new economy, a new kind of capitalism. And I'm really the forerunner of what, what's happening now. But, uh, I don't think Tom would recognize what's happening now and he'd probably have a few opinions on it.

ABDULLAH: Yeah. You know, I bet he never would have guessed that cannabis legalization, the thing I'm sure he was fighting to words in essence, right. Would actually turn into a tool for corporate America to take over cannabis. And it's a really, really ugly truth of this post cannabis legalization world that we live in. What do you think, Rex, what do you think Tom Forcade would think of the Capitol cannabis landscape of 2019?

REX WIENER: Well, I think he would take a dim view of the way things are going now in the, the super corporate conglomerate, uh, approach, even though at the same time he would be seeking to, um, you know, get a piece of the action, I'm sure.

BEAN: So now we got the magazine in place, we got the advertisers, we got the distribution and High Times went from a complete shoestring startup to selling 300,000 copies a month and employing an editorial staff of 20 people within one year. But for Tom, a success brought with it a host of challenges as he wrote in an editorial letter called What High Times is all about. Uh, and so this is him in his own words. High Times was a coldly conceived project that we definitely expected to succeed eventually. Instead, it took off like a rocket. And our main problem has been holding on to our personal identities, to our editorial independence, to our corporate independence, to reality, to our own unique rapport with our readers, to our sanity. We are facing a future that needs help. We know that as far as that future is concerned, we are playing for keeps.

REX WIENER: We had a concept at the time of the righteous dealer and, um, and that was what Tom sought to be, how to govern his actions as a person and as, as a businessman, which had to do with the, uh, Bob Dylan lyric, uh, to live outside the law you must be honest, he would say that nine times a day and, you know, try to, uh, uphold it. But we were on the adversarial and we were used to being, you know, not losing but just, you know, just not winning. And suddenly there's Tom and, uh, a staff of, uh, 20-25 people and a, uh, success story High Times was a success from the very first issue and not just, you know, in business terms, but in editorial terms. I mean, we had the most amazing content and uh, you know, including my stories. We published all sorts of great stuff. Uh, Bean you, you would remember some of these writers and articles, Hunter Thompson on the cover. Uh, we were the first magazine to have Debbie Harry on the cover or talking about new wave.

BEAN: He had access to this incredible talent pool because of the underground press syndicate. And now he was able to pull in all of these people into his vision because like you say, it had that one element that was always missing, which was financial success Time and Newsweek both wrote like glowing stories about the publishing success story of the 70s. Bob Marley sat for his first national magazine cover interview, which was also with Ed Dwyer. And he said the Santa Marta gold that they supplied him was the best weed he'd ever smoked outside Jamaica.

ABDULLAH: Oh, amazing.

BEAN: Uh, Cheech and Chong were on the cover. Um, it's, everybody seems to like be just loving this new thing that was just waiting to happen. There was the culture, but there was no voice for it. But for Tom success, again kind of like throws him for a loop and he, you know, as Rex said, he alternates between these manic States where he's super engaged, hyper engaged, going over every little detail of everything and dark holes. People used to call him Captain Bad Vibes, shit at times on Rex's nodding with some rough memory of that.

REX WIENER: Well, he'd call me up at three in the morning at the, at the peak of High Times success and say, alright, I'm gonna fire everybody tomorrow morning, close down the

magazine. And I'm sitting there going, Hmm. If I say no, he'll do it anyway. If I say yes, maybe he won't do it.

REX WIENER: so I would say, uh, yeah, Tom, it's your magazine. Go ahead. Shut the damn thing down. Fire everybody. Especially that person I don't like there and [inaudible] and that would shake him up for a moment and then he'd laugh and then he'd drift off. But, uh, he was, um, mercurial, he was changeable. He was absolutely unmanageable and you couldn't tell him anything if he was in a certain state of mind. And, and that made it difficult for people at High Times to meet their deadlines and their production schedules and, you know, get bills paid on time and, and uh, you know, deal with the, uh, the receptionist who we all knew was the informant. So we had to, you know, keep that person over there.

BEAN: Sure. [inaudible] pretty standard in any office type environment. You just have, assume one person is a government informant. Yeah. And you just have, you know, the real birthday party and then you have a fake birthday party where you invite the informant for pretty standard. Um, yeah. So people on the magazine, you know, kind of learn to ride these waves and they would kinda just try to hang on until Tom decided to quote, meet with investors, which everyone understood meant he was going to go on a smuggling run. Arguably he no longer needed the money, but he felt most at ease when he was courting danger.

ABDULLAH: He's doing it for the rush and it's bring it for the rush.

BEAN: We're going to get, uh, take a break in a minute. We'll, we'll smoke some weed for, for money and love. And when we come back, we'll, I'll talk about how even when things would go wrong on a smuggling run, uh, the adrenaline or that just pushed him higher and he pulled himself out of these, uh, dark holes.

ABDULLAH: We'll be right back.

AUDIO LOGO: Smoke Weedia.

ABDULLAH: We're back. We're talking about Tom Forcade, the founder of High Times, and we're here with Rex Weiner, who was there when all this shit happened and when we left off being, you promised you'd tell us about a smuggling run gone awry.

BEAN: Yeah. So one time a Tom was down in the Everglades and he was going to take possession of a nine ton shipment of weed, which is think of a ton of weed and then times it by now. Lot of fucking weed. Uh, yeah. As we said in episode one, he said there's two kinds of dealers,

ABDULLAH: Guys who need a forklift and guys who don't need a forklift.

BEAN: He, he needed a forklift. But when he gets there to the Everglades, it turns out the supplier was supposed to have a whole crew to unload this, but he didn't. Uh, so yeah, so working side by side without a break, it took Tom and his longtime smuggling partner, Jack Coombs more than 24 hours to load all those bales of weed into their Winnebago.

ABDULLAH: Oh my God. Nine tons of weeds. I mean, that's like we're talking metric tons here, right? Like how much weed can a guy carry, you know, at one time, a hundred pounds of it. And maybe, you know what I mean? Like that's insane. I get, imagine 24 fucking hours

BEAN: And then as they're finally driving away, and this Winnebago stuffed with nine tons of weed, a wildlife officer spots their vehicle and starts trying to essentially pull them over. Uh, but Tom is this experienced hot rodder from his youth and he's like, fuck it. And he takes off full speed through the swamp trying to get away from this wildlife officer. And finally Tom gets to the end of the road and he sees it's blocked by another police car. So he runs the Winnebago as far off the road as he can manage, kinda crash lands it and him and Jack Coombs is smuggling partner run off on foot. They just have to abandon nine tons a weed and they run into the swamp.

ABDULLAH: Oh my God. It's Breaking Bad situation.

BEAN: Yeah. So the cops try to find him. They can't find them. They send out bloodhounds but the bloodhounds lose the scent.

ABDULLAH: Uh, uh, but what do you mean they lost the scent they're bloodhounds?

BEAN: So for the next two days, they're stuck in the swamp. They're soaking wet. There's insects swarming all over them. They don't have any food or water. And they're like totally desperate. You know, they're dying a thirst and they decide their only chance is to crawl on their hands and knees pass the police barricade because all the cops or the pigs as a to use the parlance of the time are sitting now are sitting in their cars with the AC blasting. So they're like Pink Panther style, just crawling along the side of the, of the door and they escape. So what happens next? Well, you know, the magazine just keeps getting bigger and the success of that is sort of juxtaposed against this increasing dark side of Tom facade coming out. You know, in a way he, he wrote this essay where he talked about how the most successful weed smugglers and weed dealers are the people you never hear about. Um, and now in this one sort of act, he's brought all this attention on himself. I think there's definitely, there's shades of what happened with Orpheus lingering over him. He had already created a publication, seen it, attacked by the government, has offices firebombed he ran away and now he's getting those same feelings. Um, and his smuggling operation is ongoing and that's kind of his escape route from it. But what was the feeling like in the magazine at this point? A few years into it,

REX WIENER: We felt successful. We felt we were really making progress and making a mark in the world for, uh, for weed and for the counterculture. And, uh, Tom was not a, a drug snob,

but he did believe in the weed as an antidote to a certain kind of, you know, straight corporate mindset. And, uh, so it was sort of his mission to bring in weed in that righteous dealer way. At the same time, you had, um, much more businesslike and, and definitely more deadly people from Columbia flying in the product on their own. This, you know, vast network of, well, that's where the cartels began in Bogota and Medellin. And some real nasty characters.

BEAN: The war on drugs doesn't fight the cartels. The war on drugs created the cartels because when you have these really serious prison sentences, and we did an episode about a gentleman, Robert Plattshorn, who did 30 years for smuggling into the country and he was on the cover of High Times, his story was, um, but that pushes all the nice guys and nice ladies out and what moves in are these cartels and yeah, to see Tom sort of losing another dream is really hard. Uh, I can imagine. And I think one thing that gave him a lot of hope at the same period of time was this rise of the punk movement, right?

REX WIENER: Yes. High Times was the first magazine to have Johnny Rotten and The Sex Pistols on its cover.

ABDULLAH: Ah.

REX WIENER: Yeah. And uh, you know, Tom really liked the spirit of it. He was not well received by the punk rockers itself. He was sort of an old guy by then and a hippie and you know, not really

BEAN: An old guy being in his early 30. Yeah. So the punk movement is like, Hey shit, you're done. Yeah. And that, that old hippie saying never trust anybody over 30. Yeah, yeah. And he, he sees this happening in realtime. He's in New York, which was a center of it, and he's got this a magazine and he's very much just in the mix there, close to the lower East side. They're close to where CBGBs was. Um, so Tom facade decides that when The Sex Pistols are going to have their first tour of the United States, he's going to make a definitive documentary about this tour, which, if you'd know anything about it is like one of the most ill-fated tours in music history. For some reason somebody decided The Sex Pistols should tour small venues in the South. And Tom also has no connection whatsoever with the band. Warner Brothers, their record label hates him over a long standing dispute where he went to one of their other films and disrupted it on purpose constantly. They tell The Sex Pistols manager, there's this guy Tom Forcade. He's a government informant. He's trying to set you up for a drug bust. Don't have anything to do with him at any cost.

ABDULLAH: Holy shit. Oh my God, this guy is fucking wild. [inaudible] guns. That's some good trolling.

BEAN: Yeah. So, so he and classic Tom facade style. He shows up at the first stop on the tour with a bag of money and a bag of weed and he goes to the tour manager. And I'm sure this, most people in the 70s took one or the other bag or both. I don't think it's a bad plan, but this

guy has it in his mind. Oh, this guy's coming to set me up for a drug bust and he shows up high. You want cash or weed? I want to film your band. Uh, they'll have nothing to do with him. He's just following this tour. He's got like a stitched together film crew. You know, I know you enjoy the word rag tag.

ABDULLAH: Oh yes. Absolutely. So this is a ragtag production, huh?

BEAN: This is a ragtag crew of people chasing the sex pistols around as they go from one stop in the South to another where people are protesting them, the audience is turning on them.

BEAN: They're all deeply into substance abuse. It's a disaster following a disaster, filming a disaster. And of course he sort of loves this. So when anybody else would give up, he sends a message to high times headquarters in New York. I need you to send me 12 blank checks so I can finish my film about the sex pistols. So whoever was in charge of the purse strings at High Times as well, you know, my fiduciary responsibility is not to send you 12 blank checks, which, you know, I'm not a business guy. I don't know what's right or wrong, but that was the decision. Uh, so Tom, is it rage to kind of collect whatever footage she has? It is eventually turned into this film called DOA.

ABDULLAH: Oh wow. That's something to see.

BEAN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then in his rage, he goes back to New York and everybody involved with the magazine on staff at the time, gets an embossed invitation inviting them to go to an upscale hotels ballroom. They don't know why everybody shows up and Tom Forcade is sitting on a throne and he holds a loyalty trial in the vein of Mao Zedong.

ABDULLAH: Where are you at this thing, right?

REX WIENER: No, but I knew he was planning to do this and, uh, and I couldn't tell him no. I just thought, you know, if I steer clear, maybe, you know, I won't get hit by any flying debris. And, uh, I had so many friends there at, at high times, but, you know, it's sort of like, uh, you know, just keeping your distance from a dangerous situation. And they all went through it cause they were, they were on salary and, um, and I wasn't, I could do as I pleased. So, you know, Tom was an ongoing trial in a way, and, uh, that was, uh, that was an unforgettable episode for those who were there.

BEAN: So actually at this trial, he puts all of his, uh, you know, perceived opponents and enemies on trial one by one. If you are found guilty, you're terminated on the spot. And those who were exonerated got a little red book as a keepsake and a little, a silver medal. And, you know, life went on at the magazine,

ABDULLAH: like, yeah, that's nuts.

BEAN: So despite reasserting control through this loyalty trial, Tom starts to feel really isolated and unwanted. Uh, he spends a lot of hours just holed up in his office, washing down clay Ludes with vanilla extract. Uh, that's a very specific tastes.

ABDULLAH: Yeah. Jeez.

BEAN: He feels like everybody wants his money and nobody really loves him. I mean, anybody who knows somebody with mental illness can, can relate to where these dark places go. Um, so he decides he's going to cook up a little smuggling action for himself to pull himself out of the doldrums.

ABDULLAH:: Ah, he's going back to his favorite pastime.

BEAN: Yeah. Um, so he, him and his partner, Jack Coombs are down in South Florida. While they're there, they're on a smuggling run and they're flying two planes in, into the Everglades into one of these airstrips that you talked about that are, that are hidden. And Jack Coombs is in the plane in front of him. And the idea is that you fly in low over the tree tops so that no one sees you and you don't come up on radar. And there's a S there's a Stephen Stills song called Treetop Flyer. That's about this. A lot of guys who came back from Vietnam saw a way to use their skills. Tom, when he signed up for the air national guard that was in the back of his mind. So they're flying in, in tandem and Jack is in the front plane and Tom is behind him and he watches as his best friend and really his confidant.

BEAN: And his smuggling partner, uh, clips a wing and his plane just tumbles and explodes. And Tom is able to pull up and, and avoid the wreckage. But he's crushed by this loss, uh, and

ABDULLAH: Imagine that it's terrible.

BEAN: He on and plunges him back into her depression, um, from which he never really recovers for a while. He has this idea that Jack survived and he's going to show up and he sends people to look for him and he goes to look for him himself. And it's just a fever dream, you know, he knows on some level he saw him die. Um, and this kind of sends him into his final depression. And, and I'll just read something from the last interview he ever gave. He said, the government has tapped my phones where I live, including my bedroom. To this day, they've got informers planted against me.

BEAN: They've planted women informers formers to try to fuck me. They've planted informers in positions as High Times office managers and accountants. They don't stop there either. The government has used informers against me as dope dealers, dope smugglers, pseudo radical activists, gun dealers, explosive dealers, and even lawyers. Um, and in this interview he just, um, seems at the end of his rope. Uh, and then in November, 1978, as the days grew short and Tom's bipolar disorder really kicks in again, he took his own life with a pistol shot to the head, a

desperate act, but one that he calibrated very carefully to ensure that he did not feel any more pain in death than he had in life.

ABDULLAH: That's a very, very sad and too really epic story. Really creative people are very often also very depressed people and it's really a tragic loss and it's really sad that we didn't get to see more of the creative output of Tom Forcade.

BEAN: For him to have created that space for there to be a place for me as a young journalist who was really, weed brought so much into my life and on the other hand, the war on drugs made me so angry and to have a place where I was not only allowed to voice those sentiments but celebrated for it and a readership that supported that truth at a time when it was a, a voice in the wilderness. That's an incredible legacy that touched me many decades after he passed. Let us go out on a high note. That was a cheap one, but I'm keeping it. Uh, yes. So not long after, uh, Tom Forcade's passing a private Memorial was held at windows on the world restaurant, which was at the top of the World Trade Center, so as to be as high as possible for the ceremony. Friends, family, colleagues, and co-conspirators all gathered together from all the different compartments of Tom Forcade's, very complicated life to celebrate his unique spirit and more in his untimely passing all while puffing away on an endless supply of joints, seasoned with a small sprinkle of his ashes.

ABDULLAH: Oh, that's so amazing. What a fitting Memorial for a guy who revolutionized cannabis in this really specific and interesting way. Well, that's a really incredible cannabis history story. Thank you so much Bean for speaking so personally about this story, I know that high times was a really important thing to you, an important thing for your career and your exploration of yourself and your love for cannabis, and to hear you talk about the person that originated that magazine, somebody who you idolize really, I mean, I can't imagine a better way to learn all this shit that I just learned and Rex. So amazing to have you here. Rex Weiner, weed legend, Miami Vice writer, and really just an amazing asset to cannabis. Thanks so much for being here and talking about your experience. You've seen so much shit. You've experienced a past era of subculture and of cannabis culture that young people today should really be able to appreciate and I hope that this brought your voice to them because learn your weed history.

ABDULLAH: That's why we're here. We're here to teach you about weed stuff that we don't want to forget because it's so important to our way of life and our state of mind. And that's it for this two parter about Tom Forcade, the founder of High Times magazine. Go back to the beginning and listen to it again

REX WIENER: And don't forget when it comes to throwing a pie. Don't be afraid. Give it a toss.

ABDULLAH: Amazing. An amazing ending, very fitting for this episode and thus concludes our two parter about Tom facade, the founder of high times magazine. What an Epic story. Do not expect one of these about Shane Smith. Thanks so much for listening. We'll see you next time on Great Moments in Weed History.

BEAN: Great Moments in Weed History is a Spoke Media production. It's hosted by me, David Bienenstock AKA Bean and Abdullah Saeed

ABDULLAH: We're produced by Cody Hoffmocker and Brigham Mosley with help from Lee George and Reyes Mendoza. Special thanks to the Gold Diggers studio.

BEAN: This episode was mixed by Jonathan Villalobos. Our executive producers are Alia Tavakolian and Keith Reynolds.

ABDULLAH: Check out our show notes where you'll find more information about things we discussed today and links to our sponsors.

BEAN: And if you really love the show, honestly, the best thing you could do for us is to simply tell your friends about it at the next smoke sesh.