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**REMARKS OF
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In 1980 (May 21), 1986 (September 25) and now, 1994 (February 6), a New York Times reporter has discovered the "new highly-potent marijuana." The narrative of the three reports is nearly identical: some group of previous marijuana consumers (Beats; Hippies; Baby-Boomers) recalling their days of inconsequential smoking misunderstand the current dangers of the new potent marijuana. Jane Brody, Peter Kerr, and now Melinda Henneberger, relying on "drug treatment experts and law enforcement officials," present as fact that today's marijuana is 10 or even 20 times more potent than the marijuana of the 60s and 70s.

This green miracle attributed to unspecified agronomic wisdom is never documented. The "potent" drug is then linked to a number of harms involving pulmonary, immune, and cognitive functions. This narrative is now so fixed that it appears immune to research, data, fact and truth.

Marijuana potency is expressed as the percentage weight of the sample contributed by delta-9-THC. This active chemical was not identified until 1966 and potency was rarely measured before 1970. Reports from street drug laboratories assessing anonymously submitted samples indicate that from 1970 to 1975, commercial marijuana averaged 2-4 percent THC.

In 1975, a federally-funded marijuana potency monitoring project was established at the University of Mississippi. Essentially all plant samples tested have been seized by the DEA or state criminal agencies. The summer 1993 quarterly report traces the project's entire experience.

Since 1974, approximately 20,000 samples of marijuana have been analyzed. The average THC content of all samples is 2.93 percent. Since the laboratory first received more than 250 seizures annually in 1981, there has been no discernible pattern of increased potency. The highest average potency was 3.96 percent in 1984. The lowest was 1.9 percent recorded in the last complete year tallied, 1992. These 1992 figures came from the assessment of approximately 3500 seized samples with total weight exceeding 1.5 million pounds.

The new potent marijuana is a myth.