

Bio for Irvin Rosenfeld:

I am the longest surviving of the final four Federal Medical Cannabis patients in the United States. The Federal Government has been supplying me 10 Medical Cannabis cigarettes per day for over 32 years for my severe bone tumor disorder.

In the capacity of a Federal patient, I have spoken in the following State Capitols:

Virginia, Maryland (2), Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois (2), Montana (2), Florida, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. I have spoken to politicians in New York (3), Colorado, Arizona, California, Oregon, Washington State and D.C., and Missouri.

I have been covered by numerous television and print media in all those areas.

Some of the shows I have been on are: NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw, CBS Evening News with John Roberts, CNN News with Aaron Brown, CNN Talk Back Live (5), The Montel Williams Show, Penn and Teller's "Bullshit Show", numerous documentaries such as Showtime's "In Pot We Trust", "Waiting to Inhale", PBS Emmy winning "Smoking Medicine: The Marijuana Issue", and PBS "Clearing The Smoke".

I have been covered by hundreds of newspapers including the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Miami Herald, and the Sun-Sentinel.

I have spoken publicly at many venues from five people to thousands.

I have been a Financial Consultant for the last twenty-seven years in South Florida. Before that I had owned a retail furniture and bedding store.

For the last twenty years, I have been a volunteer teaching mentally, physically, and economically challenged children and adults to sail adapted sailboats at "Shake-A-Leg" in Miami. www.shakealegmiami.org

I am a board member of "Patient's Out of Time" a 501 C-3 organization. It is the only organization that is sanctioned by the American Medical Association and the

American Nurses Association to teach doctors and nurses about Medical Cannabis to where they get Continuing Education Credits. www.medicalcannabis.com

I am a co-founder of "The Silver Tour," a 501 C-3 organization that teaches senior citizens about the benefits of Medical Cannabis. www.thesilvertour.com

I have written my life story and that of the history of the Medical Cannabis movement in this country thru my book "My Medicine" 'How I Convinced the U.S. Government To Provide My Marijuana and Helped Launch a National Movement,' which was published in 2010 and is available at www.mymedicinethebook.com

I have been able to do all this because I have the right medicine for my severe bone tumor disorder. We need to give every patient with a debilitating disorder the same privilege.

Pot-smoking stockbroker has a steady supplier: the feds

The pot comes from a farm in Mississippi run by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, which periodically sends the weed by FedEx to a pharmacy.

TNS REGIONAL NEWS

MAR 15, 2015



The interior of Irvin Rosenfeld's Toyota 4Runner reeks of marijuana. A tin stuffed with hundreds of joints lies in the trunk, and a bag full of them is stored in the door pocket.

On a recent weekday, the 62-year-old stockbroker stopped at a red light and took a drag. His exhale filled the cabin with smoke. It was his fourth joint that day. It wasn't yet lunchtime.

"This car has 80,000 miles on it," Rosenfeld announced between puffs, stray ash landing softly on the battered towel he drapes over his pleated brown trousers and red tie. "I haven't gotten into one accident."

Rosenfeld would smoke five or six more joints by day's end. In between, he would trade tens of thousands of dollars in stocks. Some days, the broker moves millions around, pausing occasionally to steal drags of marijuana from the smokeless vapor pen that tides him over indoors.

Clients have given their blessing to his 10-joint-a-day habit.

So has the Drug Enforcement Administration.

The federal agency at the forefront of the war on drugs is normally unyielding in its view that marijuana has no valid medical use. But it not only gives permission to Rosenfeld to light up any place cigarettes are allowed, but it also acts as his dealer.

Rosenfeld gets that special treatment because he has a rare bone disorder that gives him a lot of pain. He is one of only two people in the nation still actively involved in a federal program that supplies marijuana free to patients suffering from certain diseases.

The government harvests infrequently and Rosenfeld's current stash came out of the ground six years ago. Not exactly prime bud. But good enough that in three decades he has consumed about 216 pounds — hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth — to ease his pain.

"I am getting my money's worth out of my taxes, that's for sure," he said. "I am one of the few people in this country who never complains about paying them."

The program started in 1976 when Robert Randall of Florida convinced a court that pot was essential to treating his glaucoma. Rather than open the door to patients growing their own marijuana, drug officials chose to supply it to Randall.

Rosenfeld was the next to secure the same deal, and 11 more patients would trickle in, including the other patient the government still supplies, Elvy Musikka, an Oregonian with glaucoma. A doctor authorized by the government to treat Rosenfeld with marijuana writes his prescriptions and gives him regular check-ups.

The pot comes from a farm in Mississippi run by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, which periodically sends the weed by FedEx to Rosenfeld's pharmacy.

The marijuana is rolled tightly into joints that are freeze-dried and packed 300 to a container. The joints come with 14 pages of instructions on how to properly rehydrate them — most of which Rosenfeld ignores. Instead, he unrolls them, moistens their contents in plastic bags lined with wet paper towels and later rolls them back into joints.

After Rosenfeld received his first shipment, he recalled, he saw a commercial in which FedEx boasted, "We ship anything." He pointed to the bag of federal pot he was holding and told his wife, Debbie, "That's a true statement."

In the early 1990s, the Food and Drug Administration ruled that scores of AIDS patients should be given access to the program. Thousands might have signed up, but the administration of President George H.W. Bush changed the policy and halted the program.

Since then, the government has avoided keeping track of Rosenfeld's pot smoking.

"The government was never comfortable with this program," said Rick Doblin, executive director of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, a Santa Cruz, Calif.-based group that is lobbying to change federal restrictions that have pushed most major medical marijuana research abroad.

"They are just waiting for all the people in it to die. ... They purposely are not gathering data," Doblin said.

Federal officials said patient privacy laws prohibited them from discussing whether they monitor Rosenfeld and Musikka.

Rosenfeld says the drug relieves pain that is otherwise so intense that he can sit or walk for only short stretches. Because so few studies have been done on the medical effects of pot, no one can say for certain why it works for him. Nor do researchers understand why he never seems stoned.

A neurologist who treated Rosenfeld for six years, Juan Sanchez-Ramos, attributes it to a tolerance created from so much smoking, along with the low potency of government pot.

"Whenever he came to my office, he wasn't out of it or spacey," said Sanchez-Ramos, who has Rosenfeld's permission to discuss his case. "He was like your prototypical stockbroker."

The 10-page federal protocol Rosenfeld carries with him designates that he may smoke marijuana with impunity. It says he can drive so long as he is not intoxicated.

These days, Rosenfeld no longer stands out for using pot to treat an ailment. About 1 million Americans do so — in 23 states and the District of Columbia, which allow at least the medical use of marijuana.

The federal government's long-standing consent to Rosenfeld's drug use has attracted renewed attention as Congress softens its opposition to marijuana and a growing number of doctors denounce drug policies that prevent research aimed at turning pot into a properly controlled pharmaceutical.

Rosenfeld goes about his day like any other Floridian — except for the marijuana.

He plays in a softball league. He doesn't light up until the other players are enjoying their postgame beer.

He donates his time to an organization that teaches disabled kids how to sail. He doesn't smoke around children and waits until he drives away to puff on a joint.

He travels cross-country. He carries a note when he flies that directs airline security to ignore the cache of pot in his luggage.

Being in so rare a category does sometimes lead to problems in this state, where pot is banned altogether. Rosenfeld recalls a recent run-in with DEA agents based in the office park where he worked.

"I was resting in my car at lunchtime, having my usual two joints, and all of a sudden there is pounding on all four windows," Rosenfeld said. "I opened my eyes and the car was surrounded. One big guy puts a gold badge against the window and announced I was under arrest."

Rosenfeld told them they were mistaken. They told him they were the DEA.

"I said, 'Great. You should be familiar with my program!'" Rosenfeld said. It got weirder for the agents when Rosenfeld pulled out his bag of joints with the prescription on it, and then walked around to the back of his car to show them the tin can stuffed with marijuana.

Along with it, he handed over a yellowing copy of Newsweek magazine. Bill Clinton's sexual harassment accuser, Paula Jones, was on the cover. Tucked inside the issue was a story about Rosenfeld.

Rosenfeld jokes that he is resented at work because he won't share his marijuana stash, but one person who is not eager to sample it is Debbie Rosenfeld. Over the years, she developed an allergy to cannabis. Ultimately, living together became untenable for the couple. They separated.

Every one of Irvin Rosenfeld's 250 clients at the investment firm Newbridge Securities knows he's a pot smoker, he said. He brings it up by asking them whether they know anybody who has taken on the federal government and won. He tells them he has, and promises to use that same gumption in making them money.

"If you like the idea of that, I say, then use me as your stockbroker," Rosenfeld said. "If you don't like the idea of me using 10 cannabis cigarettes a day for my bone disorder, then fine, have a great life."

The owners of Newbridge declined to be interviewed and in the past asked Rosenfeld not to reveal where he worked. A few months ago the firm launched a fund that invests exclusively in medical marijuana businesses and appointed Rosenfeld an adviser to it. Since then, Newbridge's reservations about being linked to Rosenfeld disappeared.

Before Rosenfeld headed back into his office to make afternoon trades, he sat on a plush leather couch in a common area drawing hits from his vapor pen while cradling the open canister crammed with joints. Buttoned-down colleagues shuffled by.

Not one of them did a double take.

By Evan Halper - Tribune Washington Bureau (TNS)

©2015 Tribune Co.

Visit Tribune Co. at www.latimes.com

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC