



Jackpot: High Times, High Seas, and the Sting That Launched the War on Drugs

Jason Ryan

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In the late 1970s and early '80s, a cadre of freewheeling, Southern pot smugglers lived at the crossroads of Miami Vice and a Jimmy Buffett song. These irrepressible adventurers unloaded nearly a billion dollars worth of marijuana and hashish through the eastern seaboard's marshes. Then came their undoing: Operation Jackpot, one of the largest drug investigations ever and an opening volley in Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs. In *Jackpot*, author Jason Ryan takes us back to the heady days before drug smuggling was synonymous with deadly gunplay. During this golden age of marijuana trafficking, the country's most prominent kingpins were a group of wayward and fun-loving Southern gentlemen who forsook college educations to sail drug-laden luxury sailboats across the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the Caribbean. Les Riley, Barry Foy, and their comrades eschewed violence as much as they loved pleasure, and it was greed, lust, and disaster at sea that ultimately caught up with them, along with the law. In a cat-and-mouse game played out in exotic locations across the globe, the smugglers sailed through hurricanes, broke out of jail and survived encounters with armed militants in Colombia, Grenada and Lebanon. Based on years of research and interviews with imprisoned and recently released smugglers and the law enforcement agents who tracked them down, *Jackpot* is sure to become a classic story from America's controversial Drug Wars. "The adventures, the long-gone economy, and the sting that ultimately brought them down and changed US drug policy are meticulously documented and lucidly spun.... Part New Yorker feature-part Jimmy Buffet song. . . . The result is adventuresome, lavish, informative fun." —GQ "[A] rollicking story, Ryan manages to pack in one amusing tale after another.... *Jackpot* is a rip-roaring good read." —Charleston City Paper "High times on the high seas: Investigative reporter Ryan recounts the glory days of dope smuggling and their terrible denouement.... A well-told tale of true crime that provides a few good arguments for why it should not be a crime at all." —Kirkus Reviews "Reads like an international thriller. . . . chock-a-block with hilarious and hair-raising anecdotes of fast times." —New York Journal of Books "[A] thoroughly researched account of Operation Jackpot, the drug investigation that ended the reign of South Carolina's 'gentlemen smugglers,' Ryan recreates the era with a vivid, sun-drenched intensity." —Publishers Weekly

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