

Pioneer marijuana collective stays true to its roots

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

SANTA CRUZ – By his count, Don Ivey, 56, should have been dead six times by now.



The artisan and former competitive in-line skater survived both a stabbing and a scuba diving accident as a young man. Fifteen years ago, he was diagnosed with AIDS and hepatitis C. Five years ago, he crashed a motorcycle, landing facedown, partially paralyzed, in an ocean bay.

Recently, just 30 days removed from his second emergency room visit for internal bleeding and vomiting blood, Ivey walked up a terraced marijuana garden that is a medicinal and spiritual refuge for the sick, injured and dying.

Rising above rows of English lavender and shielded by a crescent-shaped ridge in the Santa Cruz Mountains, the pot garden for the Wo/Men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana is an icon in the history of the California marijuana movement.

The garden survives despite a 2002 raid – and seizure of the crop – by heavily armed federal agents. It thrives amid an aura of death, as members reap the harvest while grieving for those who succumb to terminal illnesses.

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