

Humboldt pot growers want to be legit

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

EUREKA – Joey Burger was 14 when his naturalist parents moved from Santa Cruz to settle in the coastal forest of Humboldt County.

Local hippies and homesteaders welcomed the new kid in the woods. They schooled him in the regional art – growing marijuana.

“It was never looked upon as a bad thing,” Burger said.

Except before the fall harvests, when helicopters full of narcotics officers whipped through the sky. Neighbors rushed “to call their friends to make sure they were OK,” he said.

These days, it isn’t just helicopters that frighten Humboldt County’s pot culture.

America’s most renowned bastion of illicit marijuana growing is threatened by cavernous, city-taxed cultivation warehouses soon to be licensed in Oakland. It is alarmed by cities from La Puente to Berkeley to Sacramento that approved taxes on dispensaries or endorsed medical marijuana cultivation, sanctioning a weed economy wider and more competitive than ever.

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