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## Cornbread Mafia: A Homegrown Syndicate's Code Of Silence And The Biggest Marijuana Bust In American History

*By James Higdon*



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Author James Higdon—whose relationship with Johnny Boone, currently a federal fugitive, made him the first journalist subpoenaed under the Obama administration—takes readers back to the 1970s and '80s and the clash between federal and local law enforcement and a band of Kentucky farmers with moonshine and pride in their bloodlines. By 1989 the task force assigned to take down men like Johnny Boone had arrested sixty-nine men and one woman from busts on twenty-nine farms in ten states, and seized two hundred tons of pot. Of the seventy individuals arrested, zero talked. How it all went down is a tale of Mafia-style storylines emanating from the Bluegrass State, and populated by Vietnam veterans and weed-loving characters caught up in Tarantino-level violence and heart-breaking altruism.

Accompanied by a soundtrack of rock-and-roll and rhythm-and-blues, this work of dogged investigative journalism and history is told by Higdon in action-packed, colorful and riveting detail.



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"[A] lucidly spun tale.... Think Tarantino on Kentucky bluegrass, scored with Creedence and vigorously reported."

—*GQ*

"A boggling and wacky history that illuminates the shadowy area between the good guys and the bad guys, and vividly documents how far the temptations of one plant can take men—from the jungles of Belize, the hills of Afghanistan, and into the very soul kitchen of the American heartland."

—Geoffrey Gray, author of *The New York Times* bestseller *SKYJACK: The Hunt for D. B. Cooper*

"In *The Cornbread Mafia* James Higdon takes readers into a sub-culture that will surprise many—Catholic hill people of Kentucky. The area was renowned for distilling whiskey, legal and otherwise, and after exposure to the war in Vietnam, many locals turned to the cultivation of marijuana and thrived. The characters Higdon reveals to us are not notably different from Protestant thugs of the hills, but not one has ever snitched. The history of the region, the details of the crimes and way of life, make for a strangely compelling book and an insight from another angle into our own recent past and present."

—Daniel Woodrell, author of *Winter's Bone* and *The Outlaw Album*

"James Higdon has written a compelling, fast-moving saga about how a backwoods band of outlaws, begat by Kentucky moonshiners of the 1920s, took over the marijuana business in the Midwest and led the Feds on the biggest pot chase in American history."

—Bruce Porter, author of *BLOW: How a Small-Town Boy Made \$100 Million with the Medellin Cocaine Cartel and Lost It All*

"Juicy storytelling—provocative, detailed and brilliantly documented...."

—The Good Men Project

"The state of Kentucky should declare itself the storytelling capital of the nation. The place is brimming with remarkable, colorful stories and some of the most natural storytellers you'll ever meet. James Higdon and his new book, *The Cornbread Mafia*, are the latest proof of that. This is a tale that is so rich and utterly startling that it's honestly hard to believe in parts. But Higdon's research is smart, and his writing is smooth. He's especially good on the history of this American saga, which may have fallen through the cracks of time without his hard work."

—Ann Hagedorn, author of *Wild Ride: The Rise and Tragic Fall of Calumet Farm Inc.: America's Premier Racing Dynasty*

"Part much-needed history lesson, part hillbilly noir, *The Cornbread Mafia* is the perfect bookend to Ken Burns's *Prohibition*, and far more timely. It unflinchingly details the damage done by both those who flout our nation's drug laws and those who enforce them. Authoritative, thrilling, and sobering."

—Pinckney Benedict, author of *Miracle Boy and Other Stories* and *Dogs of God*

"From *Boardwalk Empire* to *Breaking Bad*, we as a nation are fascinated by the interplay of crime, character,

and controlled substances. And if anyone doubts that fact is more amazing than fiction, then read this book. In *The Cornbread Mafia*, James Higdon traces the rise and fall of a marijuana industry tucked in Middle America, and the saga stretches from Prohibition to the crack era. With exceptional reporting and infectious storytelling, he takes readers for one unforgettable ride.”

—Samuel G. Freedman, author of *Jew vs. Jew: The Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry* and *The Inheritance: How Three Families and the American Political Majority Moved from Left to Right*

“Who knew Kentuckians take marijuana as seriously as they do bourbon? James Higdon digs deep to document American pot pioneers and their extralegal escapades. Thoroughly researched, *The Cornbread Mafia* is chock-full of fascinating homegrown history, not to mention a plethora of entertaining anecdotes of illegality. Higdon provides an intimate look at an exceedingly wild bunch of outlaws. Most impressively, he gains exclusive access to Johnny Boone, an eccentric, pot-farming legend and longtime fugitive from the law.”

—Jason Ryan, author of *Jackpot: High Times, High Seas, and the Sting That Launched the War on Drugs*

“I knew of course that decades ago, Prohibition pushed moonshiners further into the hollows of Appalachia; now in Jim Higdon’s pulsating true thriller I’ve discovered that crackdowns on pot are propelling today’s newly minted desperadoes deeper into the wilds of rural America, determined to harvest their crop and supply millions of Americans with the bud they crave. Higdon has written a speeding bullet of a book that turns grower Johnny Boone into one of the most fascinating characters I’ve encountered in years. If Hunter S. Thompson were still with us I believe he’d be praising *The Cornbread Mafia* and telling his pals to read it. But since Dr. Gonzo is gone, I’ll do the job myself: ‘Read *The Cornbread Mafia* for a hit of real-life excitement. This is a true-crime drama that will keep you hugging the edge of your chair.’”

—Philip S. Turner, bookseller, publisher, and blogger at “The Great Gray Bridge”

“Whether you are interested in learning more about a unique chapter of Kentucky’s and our nation’s history or just want to be entertained, you should read this book. More importantly, though, *The Cornbread Mafia* is a case study of the effects upon a single tight-knit community of the drug laws put in place by successive administrations. Whether you support these laws or oppose them, this book provides a window into how those laws affect real families and their communities. Higdon’s book is especially timely, coming on the heels of the Ken Burns documentary, *Prohibition*, and Ron Paul’s presidential campaign.”

—Trey Grayson, Director of the Institute of Politics (IOP) at Harvard University

## From the Inside Flap

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#### About the Author

James Higdon has worked for the *Louisville Courier-Journal*; the *New York Times*; *PBS Frontline's* Tehran Bureau; contributed material to *The Prairie Home Companion*; and researched the NYPD for the police drama series *NYC-22*. His reporting relationship with Johnny Boone landed him in the crosshairs of a federal manhunt, making him the first journalist subpoenaed by the Obama administration. He lives in Lebanon, Kentucky.

## Users Review

#### From reader reviews:

##### **Peter Clark:**

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important work, like looking for your favorite publication and reading a guide. Beside you can solve your short lived problem; you can add your knowledge by the e-book entitled Cornbread Mafia: A Homegrown Syndicate's Code Of Silence And The Biggest Marijuana Bust In American History. Try to stumble through book Cornbread Mafia: A Homegrown Syndicate's Code Of Silence And The Biggest Marijuana Bust In American History as your close friend. It means that it can to become your friend when you sense alone and beside that course make you smarter than previously. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you. The book makes you much more confidence because you can know anything by the book. So , we need to make new experience along with knowledge with this book.

##### **Alan Dougherty:**

The book Cornbread Mafia: A Homegrown Syndicate's Code Of Silence And The Biggest Marijuana Bust In American History can give more knowledge and information about everything you want. So just why must we leave the great thing like a book Cornbread Mafia: A Homegrown Syndicate's Code Of Silence And The Biggest Marijuana Bust In American History? Wide variety you have a different opinion about reserve. But one aim that book can give many info for us. It is absolutely right. Right now, try to closer together with your book. Knowledge or info that you take for that, you are able to give for each other; you can share all of these. Book Cornbread Mafia: A Homegrown Syndicate's Code Of Silence And The Biggest Marijuana Bust In American History has simple shape nevertheless, you know: it has great and big function for you. You can seem the enormous world by open up and read a guide. So it is very wonderful.

##### **Megan Rivera:**

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