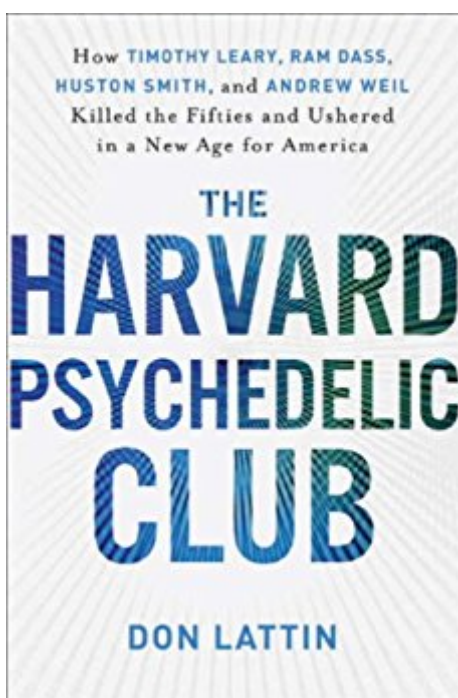


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# The Harvard Psychedelic Club: How Timothy Leary, Ram Dass, Huston Smith, And Andrew Weil Killed The Fifties And Ushered In A New Age For America



## Synopsis

Don Lattin has created a stimulating and thoroughly engrossing read. "Dennis McNally, author of *A Long Strange Trip: The Inside History of the Grateful Dead*, and *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America* It is impossible to overstate the cultural significance of the four men described in Don Lattin's *The Harvard Psychedelic Club*. Huston Smith, tirelessly working to promote cross-cultural religious and spiritual tolerance. Richard Alpert, a.k.a. Ram Dass, inspiring generations with his mantra, "be here now." Andrew Weil, undisputed leader of the holistic medicine revolution. And, of course, Timothy Leary, the charismatic, rebellious counter-culture icon and LSD guru. Journalist Don Lattin provides the funny, moving inside story of the Cambridge Quartet, who crossed paths with the infamous Harvard Psilocybin Project in the early 60s, and went on to pioneer the Mind/Body/Spirit movement that would popularize yoga, vegetarianism, and Eastern mysticism in the Western world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This'll be a brief review. I think the author dreamed up a catchy title for his book then tried to adapt his subject matter to conform. It didn't work. Putting Andrew Weil and Huston Smith in such a club is a huge stretch. And, to include them with the two criminal druggie cultists Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert is criminal in itself. Yes they had contact with Leary and experimented with LSD but that doesn't mean they were members of a club. Weil is a legitimate medical doctor and alternative medicine practitioner and has had a brilliant career without tricking people into experimenting with dangerous drugs. Smith was a highly-regarded expert on the world's religions and just because Leary persuaded him to try LSD as a religious, mind-expanding experience does not qualify Smith to be a member of a psychedelic club. Despite this, the book educated me about Leary and Alpert. Don't let the "professor" in front of their names or that they told Harvard administration they were doing "research" mislead you. Just because they were smart and wrote books means nothing. They ruined hundreds of lives under the guise of experimentation. These guys were the biggest con artists since Charles Ponzi. What's funny: Timothy Leary is quoted as saying as much.

An excellent book that captures the flavor of the time, with convincing and honest portraits of some of characters involved. It doesn't attempt to be grand or grandiose, by giving 'the meaning' of the 60's. But a wonderful portrait of a time and place. If you were there, you'll love this book.

If you grew up in the sixties, like I did, or a student of this period, you will really enjoy this book. The writer really did his research about these four men and I learned a lot about them. The sad part for me was what happened with Timothy Leary, who was obviously bi polar. This book was marked down when I found it on Bookbub, so grab it while you can!!

I think it interesting to learn about the deceit involved within the academic experience of four alpha males during the sixties. It also reinforces the uselessness as well as the seductiveness of prolonged drug use. As we all know three of the four men decided to look for enlightenment outside of the drug culture. One Dr Leary died believing that drugs can be the gateway to enlightenment. An illuminating drug study in the throes of sixties counterculture.

I am familiar with the four Harvard men in the story. They are famous in their own right. I learned a few things about an era that I also grew up in but never put together - the research that Psychedelic drugs could somehow benefit Society. The Harvard University class of 1964 were amazing young men and 2 amazing professors..

The author is sincere but he writes like a sports journalist. His historical analysis is trite and too embedded in baby boomer self regard. But the story is fascinating, and it made me very curious about the ways LSD might have contributed to the culture of higher education in the sixties and seventies.

Although I had read Timothy Leary's autobiography, Ram Dass' Be Here Now and most of Andrew Weil's early works, I was unfamiliar with how they all came together at Harvard in the early 60s and pretty much created mind expansion through LSD. It's unfortunate the drug became sensationalized and stigmatized, as it's evident that we can learn much about human behavior and how the mind works through careful and controlled study of its unusual effects. Though some may not like the format, switching between the four protagonists, I found it works and kept the story moving along nicely. I also appreciated the interviews and research put in by the author. Not a serious study by any means, but a light and refreshing overview of a remarkable era.

A must read for psychohistorians of any age. Personally compelling if one participated in the inception of the psychedelic transformation of post WWII Western rational materialistic consciousness.

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