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# A NEW LEAF

A PUBLICATION OF MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS

## Never in my Wildest Dreams

By Zach B.

Hi, I'm Zach, pothead. This is the short version of my story.

I grew up in a broken home. There were custody battles for me and my brother from the time I was five until twelve. Both my parents loved me very much. My mom and my dad were pot smokers. I fought a great deal with my mother, who had custody of me until I was almost 13. My mom was bipolar and schizophrenic. She committed suicide two years after I went to live with my dad. I went through a period of intense mourning. This period began to subside when I discovered a group of friends who got high frequently. Within 6 months I was a daily pot smoker. I was 15. I remember trying to quit smoking during the first year and being unable. I smoked at night to help me sleep.

I wanted to be a professional musician since I was a child. In high school I isolated when I wasn't with my pot smoking friends. I didn't think of it as isolation, because I was practicing my instrument or writing music, but the truth is that I was either scared of people or didn't like them.

I blamed the world for my problems. I had severe depression, poor concentration, poor social skills, terrible sleep and eating habits, poor work habits, and a lot of fighting at home. I thought that if I could just have a cabin in the woods everything would be better.

I went to college for music in Ohio, and after 2 years (at 3 different colleges) I was asked to withdraw from a top music program where I was on scholarship. I was not doing my work. I was getting high all day every day, skipping classes, and I slept through an important concert that I was supposed to perform in.

I moved to British Columbia. I went to Grateful Dead shows, rainbow gatherings, and other places where people got high all the time. I lived in houses or camps where getting high and drinking was a daily activity. I thought I had a lot of friends. I got a dog. I abused my dog. I worked 27 different jobs between the ages of 17 and 23.

I spent a period of time clean, living in a Buddhist Meditation Center. The periods of time that I was able to stay clean after leaving the meditation center became shorter and shorter, until I was eventually getting high at the meditation center.

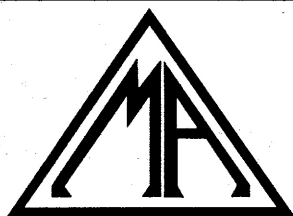
I moved back east and eventually bought a cabin in the woods. I lived there for 4 years, still getting high daily, and now drinking most nights. In the winter of 1999 I called a suicide hotline to tell them that I was going to commit suicide. They told me that they couldn't help me until I actually attempted to commit suicide. Through a series of events I wound up in a psychiatric ward. They would not admit me because when I was honest with them about my drug use they determined that I needed treatment.

I went to a treatment center and rejected what they had to offer because I did not think that marijuana was like the other drugs they treated, and I did not believe that marijuana was the source of the problem.

I continued to get high and live in a state of total despair for the next two months. On Christmas of 1999 I met a recovering heroine addict named Mike B. at a friend's party. He had 18 years in the program. He shared with me that he believed marijuana to be the most destructive drug available because it was socially acceptable, a person could function on it, and the bottom that a person had to reach would not be as intense and recognizable as harder drugs or alcohol. I told him some of my story and broke down crying. He put his hands on my shoulder, looked in my eyes, and said, "You don't have to feel this way any more." I believed him. I asked him what to do. He said go to any 12 step meeting I could find and substitute the word pot for whatever that program was for. He told me to go to 90 meetings in 90 days.

I did what he said. I got a sponsor. I worked the steps of NA out of a step guide. I struggled a great deal with the 2nd step. I felt that I had a closer relationship with God than the people in the rooms

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## A NEW LEAF

The purpose of *A New Leaf* is to carry the message of recovery from marijuana addiction. It is through the written experiences of recovering addicts and their stories that we may find experience, strength and hope.

Articles submitted should reflect recovery, unity, and service.

The articles contained in *A New Leaf* are the sole opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Marijuana Anonymous as a whole.

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*A New Leaf* each month to subscribers in  
31 states

## The Roving Reporter

For the January issue, the Roving Reporter asked, "What do we mean when we say that Step 1 is the foundation of our program?"



And MA answers:

I've heard it said that if a member of the fellowship works the First Step *perfectly*, they will never relapse. It would be difficult to work other Steps without first admitting we were powerless and that our lives were unmanageable.

— Lisa T., District 5

It's easy to say I'm powerless. I am powerless over marijuana. There, I just said it. But to really mean it, and relinquish whatever control I now think I have over marijuana is very tough. Just because I go to a few meetings, volunteer for service and fellowship with others; and now that my life seems more manageable than before, I have some control over my addiction. There is NO control. I am still powerless. It is a daily struggle and not a one-time thing reserved for newcomers. I have to say it and believe it every day of my life. Even if I get stuck on other steps (for years at a time)—if I truly believe I am powerless then there will be a tomorrow with clarity.

— Peter S., District 5

For the February issue, the Roving Reporter asks, "What's your advice to somebody who feels like they're stuck in their Step work?"

### Goodbye – and Thanks

Dear Jane,

We've been separated for over a year now, and I decided to follow the advice of a friend of mine in writing you this letter. We were together for such a long time – 12 years – and sometimes I still miss you. But our relationship was so toxic at the end, and I know in my heart that I made the best choice for my future in letting you go.

In the beginning it was so much fun. You opened a whole new world to me, introduced me to many friends (a few of whom have stuck around), and made me feel great. But somewhere along the line you turned on me. You demanded all of my time, money and energy while giving me nothing in return but holes in my memory and in my heart. I cared for you more than anything else, and my life suffered – I suffered – for you. I thought I needed you, couldn't live without you.

The truth is, my life couldn't be better since I flushed you out of my life and found something bigger than the both of us to rely upon. You were a part of my life for a reason, and for this I am so very grateful. Without you I wouldn't have found true peace, love and friendship I now enjoy. I know you are out there somewhere, making new friends too. It's my hope that when we cross paths again, I'll have the strength and conviction of past experience to say no, should you ask me to dance.

With respect,  
Drea

## Thoughts on Tradition 12

"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

### Tradition 12 Makes Us a Community

By Anonymous

The anonymity that is talked about here, to me, is the anonymity of "me to you, and you to me." This tradition has allowed me to stay in the rooms of MA, by the constant mantra of "principles before personalities." It doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, what you do or what you've done; we are all one in this program and in this process. We are all a part of a community of people desiring recovery from addiction. I don't have to like you, but I do have to accept you as another recovering person. If I shut someone out because of personality conflict, then I shut out their message, and I've learned that even people whom I don't resonate with personally have said many things that have kept me clean and sober another minute, another hour, another day.

### Tradition 12 is About Humility

By Dan L.

What Tradition 12 means for me is not trying to run the meetings I attend. One of my defects is lack of faith, or fear – fear that the meeting will disintegrate if it doesn't follow the Traditions the way I interpret them. Tradition 12 is about humility in anonymity. It means sitting in a meeting and not being singled out by the person sharing, for good or ill. It means I can come to the meeting and sit in the back and isolate if I want.

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page 1 share continued--

and that it was shallow to even try to talk about God or put a word or name on God. I stayed miserable, and eventually became willing to try some of the suggestions and listen to people who seemed happier than me.

After 4 months I became willing for the first time in my life to seek outside help. I had not been to a doctor in 10 years. I slept in sleep labs. I saw many psychiatrists and psychologists. I became willing to try meds for my various problems and learned how to be accountable to my sponsor and homegroup regarding taking my meds as the doctor ordered.

I got stuck on my 4th step. I wound up writing a huge autobiography. I wanted to do a perfect 4th step. I nearly got high over it. I changed sponsors, and finished my 4th step as the AA Big Book outlines it.

After 1 year I discovered MA online. I went to the MA convention in Seattle. Soon after, I started an MA group in Texas where I was attending college. I continued to journal and do step-work daily.

My understanding of my higher power changed. This change, the meds, the doctors, and the meetings created change in me far beyond what I ever sought when I came to recovery. I have not had significant depression for nearly 2 years. I can go to sleep and wake up when I need to. I have more friends than I have ever had in my life, and they sincerely care about my mental, physical, and spiritual health. I have methods to deal with the difficult situations that I encounter in daily life.

In November of 2002 I was hired to play drums for the 133rd edition of the Ringling Brothers' Barnum & Bailey Circus. Since then, I have been to meetings in every city I have visited. On the 15th of May I got my 3 year chip. I still do daily step work. I still talk to my friends from recovery regularly. My higher power continues to love me more and more and guide me through life.

I will never be able to express my gratitude to recovery. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that I could be marijuana-free, depression free, successful in my career goals, able to eat and sleep when I need to, and truly grateful to be alive. Thank you all for being there for me when I need you most. Thank you all for knowing what I've been through emotionally, physically, and spiritually, and for allowing me to help you in any way that I can.

All my love,

Zach B.

# MA WORLDWIDE

For Land and Online Meeting Schedules Go To: <http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org>  
email: [office@marijuana-anonymous.org](mailto:office@marijuana-anonymous.org)

## MA World Service Offices

PO Box 2912, Van Nuys, CA 91404  
800-766-6779

### San Francisco (Dist. 1)

PO Box 460024, San Francisco, CA  
94146-0025  
415.522.7373

### East Bay (District 2)

PO Box 8354, Berkeley, CA 94707  
510.287.8873

### South Bay (District 3)

P.O. Box # 551  
Saratoga, Ca. 95071-0551  
408.450.0796

### Western Washington (District 4)

POB # 17323, Seattle, WA 98107-1023  
206.548.9034

### Orange County (District 5) (Includes San Diego)

PMB #215, 358 S. Main, Orange, CA 92868-3834  
714.999.9409  
619.685.2808

### LA County No. (District 6)

PO Box 2433, Van Nuys, CA 91404  
818.759.9194

### LA County So. (District 7)

PO Box 3012, Culver City, CA 90231  
323.964.2370

### New York (District 8)

PO Box 1244, Cooper Station  
New York, NY 10276  
212.459.4423

### Santa Cruz (District 9)

PO Box 3003, Santa Cruz, CA 95063  
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### LA County East (District 10) (Includes Inland Empire)

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

Effective January 1, 2004, A New Leaf Publications has raised the price of MA's basic text, *Life With Hope*, from \$8 to \$9. To order your copy, visit [www.marijuana-anonymous.org/Pages/pub.html](http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org/Pages/pub.html).

## JOIN the New Leaf Team!

A New Leaf Publications needs a new editor and a bookkeeper! If you're interested in either position, or would just like some more info, please email us at [anlp@marijuana-anonymous.org](mailto:anlp@marijuana-anonymous.org).

## PRETTY PLEASE--

### WITH SUGAR ON TOP

Please please please please please contribute to the February issue of *A New Leaf*! We'd like to hear your story (in about 1,000 words or less), your thoughts on Step or Tradition 2, a recovery poem, or your answer to the Roving Reporter question. Send your submissions by January 20 to [anlp@marijuana-anonymous.org](mailto:anlp@marijuana-anonymous.org). Please!

**Don't Miss The Convention!**

The MA community in Portland, Oregon, is inviting you to attend the **tenth annual MA Convention**, February 13-15, 2004. It will be a weekend of meetings, workshops, speakers, dancing, hugging, recovering, love and support. As we like to say out here, it'll be **WAY TOO MUCH FUN!!!**

Here are three easy ways to find out more and to register:  
**www.ma2004.org - send an e-mail to [info@ma2004.org](mailto:info@ma2004.org) - call District 11 at 503-221-7007**

# BIRTHDAYS

Are you celebrating a birthday in the next few months? Or have you celebrated one in the last 30 days and not seen it in *A New Leaf*? If you live in a District area of MA, let your Bureau Chief know about it. If not, tell us! For contact information, see the box on page 2.

### District 3:

Douglas F.	1/13/03	1 year!
Bill L.	1/28/03	1 year!
Mark S.	1/30/02	2 years
Chris T.	1/01/99	5 years
Andy C.	1/21/98	6 years
Bobbe	1/26/97	7 years
James S.	1/28/97	7 years
Jen L.	1/8/97	7 years
Bob F.	1/01/95	9 years
Carol G.	1/15/90	14 years

### District 1:

Megan	1/13/02	2 years
Lori B.	1/11/02	2 years
Eric H.	1/18/02	2 years
Tom L.	1/25/02	2 years

### District 9:

Will N.	1/06/96	8 years
Jennifer L.	1/8/97	7 years

### District 5:

Ahryn	1/15/03	1 year!
Larry	11/28/99	4 years
Andrea	1/4/98	5 years
Sue "Tracker"	1/5/96	8 years
Dave G.	1/20/92	12 years
Melody W.	1/16/89	15 years
Cigar Matt	1/13/88	16 years
Mike L.B.	1/10/87	17 years

### District 12:

Jim H.	1/27/03	1 year!
Kevin G.	12/9/01	2 years
Ira F.	1/15/87	17 years

### District 11:

Surfer John	1/1/99	5 years
Kolleen	1/05/02	2 years

### Austin, Texas

James L.	11/23/03	1 year!
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### District 4:

Erica	1/1/02	2 years
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**Celebrating 190 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!**