

A NEW LEAF

A PUBLICATION OF MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS

March 2001

Volume 11, Number 3

Miracle Milestones In Sobriety by Michael H.

Celebrating hours, days, months and years of being clean and sober is vital for so many reasons that they could not all fit on this page. The enormous change involved with deciding not to smoke pot or drink alcohol (or try any other drugs that were on around but I hadn't gotten to them yet, partly out of fear but mostly because pot worked so well for me) again, ever again for the rest of my life, one day or sometimes one moment at a time, deserves celebration. The four years of continuous, consciously chosen sobriety I just reached deserves celebration because it is a milestone, based on a U-turn that I can only describe as a miracle. When I celebrate a sobriety birthday I am also celebrating that U-turn of four years ago. May it never change.

The way I used to live, the thought of celebrating a U-turn would have never crossed my mind. U-turns were just something to be angry and annoyed about. Sure, there had been times when I got out of some dangerous situation in the nick of time, but I never saw those experiences as U-turns because I would more than likely try them again if I thought I might be able to get away with it.

I got clean and sober in the program for alcohol, and about the time I had a year someone mentioned that there was an MA program. Finding MA was a

blessing because I could finally identify completely with all aspects of being powerless, without having to substitute the name of the drug or be wary of which AA meetings tolerated the mention of drugs and which ones didn't like you to bring it up. Pot was my drug of choice ever since my second joint. The first time I didn't really feel much of any effect, but the second time I tried pot, I felt stoned, and I fell in love with that feeling. I associate this feeling with the craving. Eventually

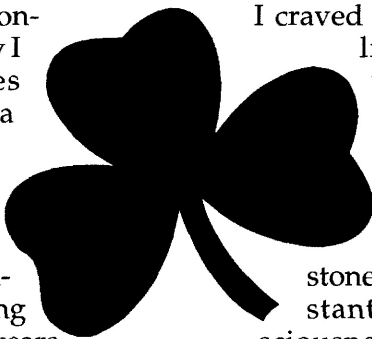
I craved pot even before I lit up because I wanted to feel stoned and I craved pot afterwards because I wanted to continue feeling stoned. I loved the instant change of consciousness that pot gave me, the feeling that everything was okay. I didn't feel the same way on booze, so this made it hard to identify that I had a problem with alcohol. For me pot is like a light switch and alcohol is like a dimmer knob. Alcohol would do when I couldn't get pot or when I was in a situation where I couldn't smoke pot.

Fortunately my original sponsor spent a lot of time talking with me about alcohol, and through these conversations I was able to make the longest 12 inch journey - from my mind, which had all sorts of conflicting thoughts running around, to my heart, which told me only one thing: I didn't

want to drink any more. Just before the end of my drinking, there was one time when the feeling of craving alcohol started to show up, so here is an example of how this disease is progressive. This past year, I was able to put my experience into some simple words: For many years before the physical craving showed up, I had an emotional craving for alcohol.

There is a lot more to celebrating sobriety than birthdays and that's what I really want to write about. Along this journey there are a lot of other wonderful experiences to enjoy, and not so wonderful experiences to struggle with, accept and grow from. I want to acknowledge these other milestones. Each time I do a step is a milestone. Each time I take on a service commitment is a milestone. My relationship with God is full of milestones.

When my sponsor gave me his final instructions on Step 4, *continued on next page*



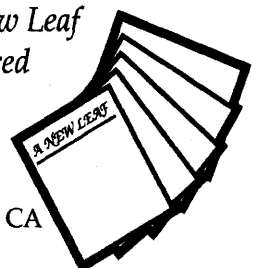
SUBSCRIBE

to

A NEW LEAF

For \$12 per year, a monthly issue of A New Leaf will be delivered to your home.

Send a check to:
PO Box 4314
No. Hollywood, CA
91617





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.

Managing Board

Publishing Editor

Tom W.

ANL Distribution Coordinator

Richard H.

LWH Distribution Coordinator

Coleman G.

District Bureau Chiefs

District 1: Frank P.

District 2: Suki G.

District 3: Jerry P.

District 4: Doug H.

District 5: Tom W.

District 6: Dan L.

District 7: Mike H.

District 8: Jeff S.

District 9: Bernie G.

District 10: Bill H.

District 11: Craig S.

District 12: Lee R.

North Bay, CA: Adam G.

Executive Board

Chairperson: Loren N.

Treasurer: Carol McD.

Secretary: Judy S.

Send all articles, inquiries and correspondence to:

ANLP@marijuana-anonymous.org

or

A New Leaf

P.O. Box 4313

North Hollywood, CA 91617

Miracle Milestones In Sobriety *continued from page one*

namely to write down all the things I was planning on taking to my grave, I gulped. When it came time to do Step 5, I found myself volunteering these things, before he even asked. That is a miracle and a milestone. When I got to Step 12, I was afraid of sponsoring others, because I didn't think I would know what to say or do. I heard other people talk about this same fear, and they got through it. I let go and found myself automatically saying "yes" when a guy came up to me and asked me to be his sponsor. That is a miracle and a milestone. Of no surprise to anyone who has tried to do Step 12 after doing the first 11 in order, I have been able to do my part, asking for help and clarification along the way. Even with the few mistakes I made, for which I willingly made amends, this has been an incredibly rewarding experience.

Before becoming a meeting Secretary, I was afraid because I didn't know enough people. I went to a lot of different meetings in order to get speakers, and met a bunch of neat people, some of which I still hang around with today. I have done booth duty at a couple of health fairs. I was not afraid of them because it's an environment that I am comfortable with. Doing a Public Information chair at a health class was a different story - let's bring on the fear. Fortunately, God did for me what I couldn't do for myself and I found myself in a position where saying no would have been far more awkward (and deep down I also knew it was an unjustifiable position) than saying yes. This was set up as a three person panel, with one person each from two other programs and MA. My sponsor had long ago mentioned that he seems to have a talent for knowing what to say in public and that is why he took the position of PI chair for the local intergroup.

It turns out that he was one of the speakers so I got to follow in his footsteps once again. After the talks, the students asked some very good questions, and I did what I do: told my truth. The presentations were all very well received, and another fear has dissolved, another miracle, another milestone.

All of this would not be possible without a relationship with a Power greater than myself. When I first walked into a 12-step meeting I saw the word "God" on the banners and bristled. In spite of this, I stayed around because I felt hope in the room. Along the way my antagonism toward God dropped a little, to the point where I could say the word with only a moderate amount of anxiety, but it wasn't until I made the decision to get sober that this relationship was able to truly develop and grow. At first the God of my understanding was the steps because that was where I was willing to place my trust. Less consciously I had placed my sponsor in a God-like position, but fortunately that illusion has since been shattered. Now my understanding of God includes a voice inside my head. All of these shifts are miracles and milestones.

Despite the gratitude I feel, there is more that I can do, and there is always more that God will reveal. Right now, I do pretty well when I ask God for guidance then sit quietly to listen, but still resist when God's voice shows up without my specifically asking for it right at the time. Writing this, I get a smile in anticipation that there will come a time when I will look back on this resistance from a point of being beyond it and chuckle at my human nature. Love is already starting to dissolve this resistance. A miracle in progress, a milestone not yet reached.



My Convention High by Ralph O.

What is it about an MA convention that makes me feel so high for so long? This is the best high I have ever felt. Better than that first time getting really stoned, and it lasts a lot longer. It has been three days since the final meeting of the convention and I am still buzzing.

Sometimes I think it is because I am so far away and really don't know many people when I get there, and know so many by the time I leave. Sometimes I think it's because most of my MA connection is online and I meet people face to face for the first time. Sometimes I think it's because it's in sunny, warm, California and I come from the bitter East Coast. I know it goes deeper than all of that. There is a common bond that is unique to potheads — we loved to get stoned on a drug that is supposedly non-addictive, socially acceptable, yet still illegal. In some programs it's different; in one, they love a legal substance that is openly AND socially acceptable. Another is a mesh of people, some of who say that pot is not that bad at all. We know better. Our lives were turned upside down by this natural herb. We understand pot a little too intimately. Only in MA do people nod when I talk about scraping my bong for some lousy, awful tasting resin. They understand that using a toilet paper tube or an apple was a ways and means to get high. MA members can laugh at having smoked carpet fuzz because we dropped our shake on the floor.

If you are reading this and you have never been to an MA convention before then please read on. This was my second time going and it seems to be getting better each year. I hope I never miss any

in the future and I wish there was more than one each year.

So, what is it like, you ask? Let me see if I can capture the feeling through the written word.

It started immediately when I arrived on Friday. I saw some people I didn't know unpacking their car, arriving as well. We gave each other that look that you can tell says, "I bet they're potheads too!" We nod and say hello, knowing we may very well be getting to know each other before the weekend is over.

After checking in, I go the registration area. There is a feeling of anticipation that says "I wonder who I will see that I know?" Now, since most of the people I know are from online, I may not even recognize the person I know. Sure enough, someone picks me out and comes up and gives me a big hug. There is a special feeling I get when I meet someone face to face for the first time after spending many hours talking to this person about our recovery highs and lows. There is a big hug and a feeling of unconditional love.

Then I get my name tag and now I am at the disadvantage. They can see my name before they get theirs. It happens. Someone calls out "Ralph?" I look up and there is someone smiling down at me. I look puzzled and he is amused. It's my online friend. I yell out "Oh my God!" and there is another big hug and a feeling of euphoria. It happens again later, twice as a matter of fact. None of these people look like the picture I had in my mind. One of them even laughs and says "I thought you were an old fat man!" I laugh and know that it wouldn't matter even if I was old and fat. These people love me uncondi-

tionally and accept me as I am, as I love them.

As the convention progresses, it is easy to meet new people. I know that whoever I meet — no matter what age, race, sexual preference, geographic location they come from — they will understand part of me. A *large* part of me actually, that was secret for so long, and still is to many people. I am a pothead. Someone who started smoking pot to be social only to end up smoking by myself and isolating. Literally smoking my life away. These people understand that and can laugh when I tell them my silly stories of scoring it and finding ways to get and stay high.

By the time the convention is over I have made more new friends than I can count. I have lots of pictures, phone numbers, and email addresses of people I hope to stay in touch with and even see in the next year. I have wonderful memories of dancing until the wee hours of the night followed up by a late night game of strip blackjack (well, sort of) and laughter up in the hospitality suite. Memories of fellowship and wonderful speakers — silly stories and standing ovations for people with 6 and 7 days clean each (way to go J and M) — big smiles of people winning prizes and the great feeling to see a newcomer win the grand prize. All of these great times without a single mind or mood-altering substance in my body.

Most of all, I am left with this feeling. A feeling of being part of something very special. Being part of a family that someone put so well — "A family that I feel closer to than I ever did, and probably ever will, then my own family."

My Convention High

concluded

ably ever will, then my own family." That is how I feel. The best part is, my MA family can still grow no matter how old and fat I may get.

It's funny, when I came to MA I thought that life would not be as much fun without my pot. I couldn't imagine having a really good time without getting stoned. Times sure have changed in two years for me. Now I can't imagine going back to that clouded thinking. This is the best high I have ever felt and it's completely natural. There is no guilt in it, no hiding it, and best of all, there is plenty to go around.

I hope to meet you next year in Seattle!

Apologies...

Readers may have noticed that there were some problems with the last two issues of A NEW LEAF. First, the January and February issues bore the same cover story. Second, there were no District 7 birthdays listed in February. Finally, George B.'s birthday was listed as 2/6/98, rather than 2/6/88, giving him 3 years' sobriety rather than 13. (The last two are corrected below.)

All of these errors are highly regrettable. The Publishing Editor, who is solely responsible, apologizes to the subscribers, the Districts who pay for the distributed copies, and to the readership in general, and pledges to make every effort to avoid such inconsistencies in the future.



<http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org>
email: info@marijuana-anonymous.org

MA World Service Office

PO Box 2912 Van Nuys, CA 91404•
800.766.6779

San Francisco (Dist. 1)
PO Box 460024
San Francisco, CA 94146
415.522.7373

East Bay (District 2)
PO Box 8354
Berkeley, CA 94707•
510.287.8873

South Bay (District 3)•
408.450.0796

Seattle (District 4)
PMB #342
300 Queen Anne Ave. N.
Seattle, WA 98109-4599•
206.548.9034

Orange County (Dist. 5)
PMB 215
358 S. Main
Orange, CA 92668-3834•
714.999.9409
619.685.2808

LA County No. (Dist. 6)
PO Box 2433
Van Nuys, CA 91404•
818.759.9194

LA County So. (Dist. 7)
PO Box 3012
Culver City, CA 90231
323.964.2370

North Bay, CA
707.793.2149

New York (District 8)
PO Box 1244
Cooper Station
New York, N.Y. 10276
212.459.4423

Santa Cruz (District 9)
831.427.4088

L.A. County East (Dist. 10)•
PO Box 94400
Pasadena, CA 91109•
626.583.9582

Portland (District 11)
PO Box 2012
Portland, OR 97208
503.221.7007

Colorado
313.607.7516

E. Pennsylvania
PO Box 194
Sadsbury, PA 19362
610.622.9243

Idaho
Box 307
Kimberly, ID 83341
208.420.3696

Rogue Valley, Oregon, Chapter
541.941.2925

New Zealand
MA Service Centre
PO Box 74-386
Market Road
Auckland 3, New Zealand
9.846.6822

Australia
MA Australia•
P.O. Box 202
Hindmarsh, 5007
South Australia
0.500.502.654

London, England Chapter
07940.503438

★ Congratulations to Our Members ★
★ Celebrating their Sober Birthdays! ★

EDITOR'S NOTE Bureau Chiefs: Please send birthdays for the current month (March for March, etc). Some of you see to be running a month behind.

District 2

Ruth	2/13/87	14 Years	Beljit	12/19/98	2 Years
Chris F.	2/??/88	13 Years	Steve S.	12/3/99	1 Year!
Charles	2/24/96	5 Years	Audrey	12/17/99	1 Year!
Malaika	2/3/98	3 Years	David L.	12/31/99	1 Year!
Dave	2/1/00	1 Year!	Mark	12/31/99	1 Year!
Eloise	2/20/00	1 Year!	Frank	1/4/88	13 Years
			Gerald	1/3/95	6 Years
			Debera (sp?)	1/3/95	6 Years
			Ali	1/1/99	2 Years
			Anna	1/13/00	1 Year!

District 5

Janet R.	3/17/88	13Years
Steve M.	3/27/89	12 Years
Gary D.	3/19/93	8 Years
Mike C.	3/25/93	8 Years
Diana	3/28/95	6 Years
John P.	3/27/98	3 Years

District 7 (Retroactive)

Avi	12/8/90	10Years
Renelde	12/31/92	8 Years
Josh	12/23/93	7 Years
Jeff M.	12/6/96	4 Years
Mike V.	12/13/96	4 Years

District 7 (Current)

Richard D.	3/1/96	5 Years
------------	--------	---------

District 8

David H.	2/14/94	7 Years
Elldee	2/11/96	5 Years

Idaho

Sara J.	3/12/99	2 Years
Leanne LaB.	3/6/00	1 Year!
Chris J.	3/16/00	1 Year!

submit.
A NEW LEAF
is accepting articles.

Please send your
submission to [ANLP@
marijuana-anonymous.org](mailto:ANLP@marijuana-anonymous.org)
or A NewLeaf Publications
PO Box 4314
North Hollywood, CA
91617