



March 2003
Volume 13, Number 3

A NEW LEAF

A PUBLICATION OF MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS

The Convention Connection

by Ralph

What is it about a convention that is so special? Is it knowing that I am surrounded by others just like me? Is it that I am far away from home? It doesn't really matter what the reason. All that matters is the end result: a feeling of euphoria and connection with something very special. Lucia said it best when she went up to accept her chip at the end of the convention: "The energy here is incredible. It's like a free high!" It really is a high. A high that no substance EVER gave me. A high beyond my wildest dreams.

This was my third convention. I had to travel about 3,000 miles for each convention, but I never regret taking that trip. What I do regret is missing the convention last year in Seattle. Those of you who have been to any of the conventions know the feeling you leave

with. For those of you who have never been to an MA convention, I am going to attempt to capture the essence of what you are missing out on.



Sure, there are plenty of events, workshops and meetings to go to, but what really happens at a convention goes far beyond the physical plane. If you are struggling with the whole higher power thing, then a convention is exactly what the doctor ordered.

I remember smoking pot and gaining that sense of being okay with myself and everything around me. I never felt "a part of" anything, even my own family. Getting high seemed to fill that void for me and make everything okay. Eventually, getting high became a necessity in order to feel "normal" around any kind of social gathering, and I often preferred to just get high alone. Can anyone relate to these feelings? If so, please read on.

I always travel to the conventions alone. My first convention was a little nerve-wracking because I knew very few people and I was about to stay for an entire weekend with mostly strangers. By the end of the convention — well, I'll save that for later.

The convention always starts with a wonderful speaker. What is so wonderful about them is that they are always a pothead, like me — someone who also had a love affair with pot, someone who smoked pot as much

as I did and found themselves isolating from the rest of the world. I can always relate to a pothead's story because it always contains chunks of my own life history. As I look around the room there are people laughing with me at things "normal" people wouldn't even understand. People nodding their heads in understanding as the speaker describes something that would seem ridiculous in "normal" life.

This starts the feeling of "connection." This feeling grows as the hours pass on. I went to a workshop Saturday morning called "Clearing the Wreckage of Your Financial Past." I thought I was the only one who had avoided the IRS for years, only to find out there were others like me. All of this builds into a stronger feeling of connection within a community of people.

Then there is the dance. I was one of those people that entered recovery thinking my time for fun was over. Once the pot went away, life was going to be boring, but at least I wasn't going to be miserable anymore. Well, I was right and wrong. I am no longer miserable, but I certainly am having more fun than I ever thought possible, more fun than pot EVER gave me. The dance shows us that we can have fun in recovery. If I was still getting stoned and walked into that dance, I would have started asking for whatever those people had taken. I would have thought there was no way all these people were clean and sober and having THAT much fun.

The climax of any convention, of course, is the birthday countdown. Everyone gets a chance to introduce themselves and share their location and clean time with everyone else. It starts with the most amount of time to the least amount of time. What is really cool is that you would think the people with the most amount of time would get the greatest applause. Just

concluded on page two

An Apology

The Production Artist of this publication, Tom W., would like to offer a heartfelt apology for the lateness of this month's issue. It is solely due to confusion and forgetfulness on his part, and is not the fault of any other member of A New Leaf Publications.



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.

Executive Board

Chairperson: Loren N.

Treasurer: Michael V.

Secretary: Debra M.

District Bureau Chiefs

District 1:	Open
District 2:	Chris M.
District 3:	Jerry P.
District 4:	Mike S.
District 5:	Terry H.
District 6:	Lacie H.
District 7:	Baljit
District 8:	Jerry M.
District 9:	Rockin' Bob
District 10:	Michael M.
District 11:	Mike F.
District 12:	John
Austin, TX:	Valerie T.
Chester Co., PA:	Lee R.

Managing Board

Editor: Paul G.

Office Manager: Judy S.

Production Artist: Tom W.

Send all articles, inquiries and correspondence to:

ANLP@marijuana-anonymous.org
or

A New Leaf

P.O. Box 4314

North Hollywood, CA 91617

The Convention Connection

concluded

the opposite. The shorter amount of clean time, the louder the applause.

By the time the convention is over, you don't want it to end. On the plane I got the post-convention blues. I was lucky enough to have extended my stay due to the snowstorm in the east, but it wasn't long enough. I want to have an MA convention every weekend. This, of course, is not possible. What keeps it alive for me is staying in touch with the people I met there, feeling grateful for having taken advantage of the opportunity to go, and, of course, allowing myself the experiences recovery has presented to me.

If I never went to a meeting, I would still be miserable. If I never went to a convention, I would still feel alone.

The Roving Reporter

Post-Convention, Part 1

The Roving Reporter worked the MA convention in February, asking the question, "How does attending an MA social event, like the convention, help keep you sober?"

Here are some of the responses:

It makes you realize even further that you're not the only one, because you see people here from all over the country. You feel a bigger sense of belonging.

— Justin, San Diego

Acceptance: at meetings you get handshakes, but here you get hugs from people you don't even know — lots of hugs!

— Andy E., District 5

It gets rid of your isolation to be among people with a similar insanity. I've always liked potheads, and they're even cooler in sobriety.

— Jim

What I find really helpful is that people from different areas come. We try to get people not in our group to come speak to our meetings, because we learn so much from the people onstage. And what I get from a workshop I would have paid \$100 for.

— Tom S., Pleasanton, CA

It's tough to score with all these MA members around!

— Mark R., District 7

It helps me with getting out of my isolation, and it helps me practice being social in a safe environment. It helps me see there are alternatives for living and gives me an opportunity to have fun and make new friends.

— Brandon, Portland, OR

It keeps me out of my head.

— Mike C., Orange County

It's an adventure. It's the only time I'll be in a room with 100 people just like me.

— Steve K., Philadelphia

I talk to people and try to take something with me to make my program better. I was very isolated in my disease, and these people bring me out of that.

— Gary

It brings us all closer and jumpstarts my recovery. It helps me to take the next step.

— Karen, Longmont, CO

concluded on page four

Step 3: The Beginning of Faith

by Manny

My name is Manny and I am a weed addict. This is only my opinion on Step 3, and if anyone would like to disagree with me, please see me.

The Third Step is the beginning of faith. Having had the honesty that I acquired in Step One, I then sought a God. My first God was a poster of Tupac, which still hangs in my room. My second God became the ocean and everything in it. I have a thinking rock that I go to, and I pray and talk to God there. When I got to Step Three I had a real problem. How could I turn my life over to the care of a poster and the ocean? I once heard that it is just a decision. A decision can be made in the blink of an eye and in my life I should be able to do that as well. I struggled with Step Three and my sponsor would always make me go back to Step One and start all over.

Step Three has two parts in it: the decision and the care. A decision is just that: a decision. How fast did it take me to decide I wanted to smoke weed? Not too long. So I started to practice making decisions. After I began to be good at making decisions, I then started to try to turn my will and my life over to the care of God. The second part is hard because I like to control things. I would say to my sponsor, F- that, I can't do that, or OH, HELL NO!

I learned that IF I wanted to be restored to sanity, I needed to trust God

and give him my life and ask him to provide for me. I take care of me. Turning my life over to the care of God is a relieving step that I try to do on a daily basis. It's like when you take a breath of fresh air and you let out bad air. When I decide to turn my will and my life over, I stay out of the results. The result is the care of God. My part is to decide.

Step Three prepares you for Step Four. My sponsor would not have let me go to Step Four if I hadn't embraced Step Three. I needed to be able to turn my life and my will over to the care of God before I could look at myself. Step Four was one of the hardest steps for me. Without making a decision to turn my life and my will over to God I would NOT have had the honesty I had in Step Four. My will tells me I am perfect. God's will is the truth. I had to practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice and practice before I was able to be able to have faith.

Sometimes I have to pray for the willingness to practice. Step Three is by far the willingness Step, but willingness needs a huge humility pill to go with it. If you are stuck on Step Three, go back a step. And if you get stuck there, go back another. Go back until you can be honest with yourself that you are a marijuana addict. I always let people know that there is always faith no matter what the circumstance. Faith has always relieved me when I have had doubt. Trust God, have faith and carry the message.

Step 3

Step 3: A No-Brainer

By Jeff T.

For me the 3rd step is the like the red pill/blue pill thing in the Matrix. Once you make the decision, your life isn't really your own anymore. It comes from the urgency of the 1st step. Once I realized my life was truly unmanageable, and that I was powerless over marijuana, I really had NO choice. It was a no-brainer. My ego HAD TO BE FIRED. It (I) had been doing a very poor job of running the show (or TRYING to run the show), and it was time to let someone or something else give it a shot.

I didn't have any kind of concept of God and certainly leaned more toward agnostic than faith, but the evidence of my success at running the show was very clear. I sucked at managing my life. So, I began to see that even though I had no idea who or what was going to steer the vehicle, I had to take my hands off the wheel. It was the beginning of faith.

Since then, I have been writing the 4th step and getting involved in service. I can see how living my life based on spiritual principles works WAY better than self will ever did. As a result, I am beginning to have more faith in some kind of higher power. I trust the universe more each day. I don't think I'll ever TURN it over completely. But through working the steps, I can continue to move past the limitations of ego and live more openly with other people. When I pray these days, I have no idea if anyone is listening at the other end, but I feel heard, just the same. I don't need a white light to shine down on me, because 11 months free from pot is enough of a miracle for me. Thanks to the 3rd step and to MA, I don't need (or want) to take the credit for my recovery.

MA WORLDWIDE

For Land and Online Meeting Schedules Go To: <http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org>
email: 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

Seattle (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
831.427.4088

LA County East (District 10)
(Includes Inland Empire)
PO Box 94400, Pasadena, CA 91109
626.583.9582

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

North Bay, CA (District 12)
PO Box 1001, Petaluma, CA 94952
707-583-2326

Austin, TX
higherground_austin@yahoo.com

Chester Co., PA Chapter
PO Box 194, Sadsburyville, PA 19362
610.622.9243

Chicago
Ma_chicago@hotmail.com

Colorado
303.607.7516

Denton, TX
outofthefogDFW@yahoo.com

Ithaca, NY
ma_ithaca@yahoo.com

Omaha, NB
omaha_ma@hotmail.com

Rogue Valley, OR Chapter
541.941.2995

Westmont, NJ
westmontma@yahoo.com

Australia
MA Australia
PO Box 202, Hindmarsh, 5007, South Australia
0.500.502.654
maaustralia@yahoo.com.au

London, England Chapter
07940.503438

New Zealand
MA Service Centre, PO Box 74-386
Market Road, Auckland 3, New Zealand
649.846.6822

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

The Roving Reporter

continued

I don't think I had any idea how to socialize before I got into recovery. So coming to an event like this has taught me a lot about that.

— Lori B, San Francisco

It invigorates my passion for recovery and gives me something to bring back to the people who didn't attend. It also refocuses me on the simple principles of the program. It's real, as opposed to something that's happening between my ears. And it's a lot of fun!

— Jeff T., Seattle

It gives us all the benefits of fellowship in concentrated form. You get examples from people who have a little more time than you and reminders of what it's like from people who are newer. It gives me energy to work my program.

— Hal M., Seattle

For the April issue, the Roving Reporter asks MA: "Why is it important to work the 4th Step?"

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

Tim	3/1/94	9 years
Stephanie	3/12/02	1 year!
Lee K.	3/19/99	4 years
Ethan	3/28/01	2 years
Ruth	2/13/87	16 years
Chris F.	2/1/88	15 years
Victoria	2/20/02	1 year!
Anita M	1/15/01	2 years
Ari K.	1/3/02	1 year!

District 3

Shirleen	3/17/99	4 years
Chris A.	3/4/02	1 year
John F.	3/12/00	3 years
Ken G.	3/18/96	7 years
Peter M.	3/24/92	11 years
Roger W.	3/9/92	11 years

District 4

Dave L.	2/27/99	4 years
Mike S.	11/11/00	2 years
Thor H.	12/6/00	2 years
Cheyney	12/24/00	2 years
Bryan D.	1/12/98	5 years
Mary S-D.	1/1/98	5 years
Jeff T.	3/4/02	1 year

District 5

Mike C.	3/25/93	10 years
Ernest F.	3/9/95	8 years
Diana	3/28/95	8 years
Patti C.	3/17/99	4 years
Robert M.	3/18/00	3 years

District 6

Sean D.	2/1/90	13 years
---------	--------	----------

District 7

Roy S.	1/23/99	4 years
Lisa L.	2/1/90	13 years
Mark L.	2/1/90	13 years
Al B.	11/24/89	13 years
Doug M.	2/4/77	26 years
Danny G.	1/17/94	9 years

District 10

Betty P.	1/18/01	2 years
Corey B.	2/19/99	4 years

District 11

Trisa	2/1/96	7 years
Maria	3/15/97	6 years
Jeff	2/1/99	4 years

District 12

Liz A.	3/11/01	2 years
--------	---------	---------

Celebrating 254 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!