



A NEW LEAF

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But By the Grace of God by Theodore

My name is Theodore, and I am a marijuana addict. As the youngest of five kids I learned a lot from my big brother and three sisters. The main thing I learned was to keep my head down and not to question authority directly. I thought my family was a very typical middle class suburban family. Today I realize that I am from a dysfunctional family. I discovered pot when I was in sixth grade. I thought that I found the answer to all my anxiety, fear, and pain.

I remember being the smallest kid in the sixth grade and ambitiously trying out for the middle school flag football team. That is where I met Todd. Todd was the first person to introduce me to marijuana. I really admired Todd because he was a sure thing for quarterback for the football team, plus he seemed to like me, too. When you're a small kid, big friends are very nice to have. Todd and I spent a lot of time smoking his step-brother's weed and drinking beer from the keg his step-dad kept full in their game room. I still look back on those days with some measure of fondness. I spent the next fifteen years trying to re-live those days when using marijuana made me feel better.

That same year I learned that my dad was being relocated to a new city by his employer. I was really upset. I knew I would have to face being a new (little) kid in school, and make new friends too, which was a very scary idea at the time. Of my original seven family members only my dad, mom, one of my sisters and I moved to the new town. My brother and two of my sisters were in their late teens and decided not to move with my parents to the new city. I really missed my oldest brother and sisters who stayed

behind. I also missed my old friends and school where I was sure that I would have made the school's flag football team.

In the new town we moved to I felt very anxious to meet new friends. The first kids who opened up to me were really cool, and we instantly had common interests. We enjoyed smoking pot together. I also met a sweet girl who I really liked. I still remember the pain I felt when she dropped me for an upperclassman in the middle of eighth grade. I didn't date another girl until I was a junior in high school.

After being dumped, my dope smoking really picked up. I never tried out for sports after that. I didn't want sports or other after-school activities (including girls) cutting into my party time with my buddies. I was 12 years old. At first my buddies and I would get high every day after school. By the time I was in eighth grade I would meet my buddies a couple of times a week before school to bong out. We would smoke out before school, at lunch and after school too. My pot smoking progressed like this until I was a junior in high school. Pot was a great escape for me! I didn't have to think about my family problems or my dreams of what my life might be.

I began to think that I might have a problem with pot when my high school girlfriend threatened to leave me unless I stopped getting high all the time. I cut all ties to my middle school buddies because I could not spend time with them and not get high. I didn't smoke pot for my entire senior year in high school. That year I got all A's and gradu-

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Thank Goodness for Progress

by Fiona

Before recovery I was a perfectionist, beating myself up when I made a mistake or forgot something or if everything I did was not perfect, telling myself I was a failure and that I was not good enough. People would compliment me or say I did something well, and I would brush off their comments by making a sarcastic remark, negating what they had said or mumbling "thanks" and then thinking inside my head "if only they knew."

So I did not enjoy any of my achievements or projects, I did not recognise any of my talents or skills, I did not think I was attractive or lovable, and yet paradoxically I craved for the approval, attention and acknowledgement of others! I kept trying to validate myself through having others notice me, or by them wanting me around, or telling me I was OK. I kept hoping that would make me FEEL OK - but it never actually did, because of that voice in my head that kept telling me how bad and worthless I was.

Consequently, when I first came into recovery I tried to do THAT perfectly too! Initially I would judge and assess others, thinking I was doing it "right" or "better" than them, because of course if I was a perfectionist about myself, then naturally I expected others to be perfect too. I expected them to think and to be like me, and then they would fall short of my expectations so I could judge and criticise them (in my mind) and maybe THAT

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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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But for the Grace of God

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ated from high school. I also grew a foot and gained 50 pounds in that year. I have the driver's licenses to prove it! I really resented my girlfriend for "making me quit" and felt terribly guilty about not seeing my old buddies.

After graduation I signed up for a three-year stint in the US Army. Although I told myself I was doing this to get money for college, I really knew that I joined the army to get some distance from my using buddies and hopefully change the direction of my life. After 10 very lonely and difficult weeks of boot camp, I got an honorable discharge for medical reasons (I fabricated a "runner's knee" injury and got out). I immediately went back to smoking pot, broke up with my girlfriend, crawled back to my old using buddies and found some new smoking partners, too.

I then decided I would work my way through college and managed to get about half way through school when I realized that being high all the time was taking its toll on the quality of my life. I remembered many times when my pals would tell a joke and everyone present would laugh except me. Or when yet another tragedy would happen in my life and I would feel no remorse. My loneliness, emptiness, and desperation were getting too big to ignore.

I knew I had to do something, so I transferred to a university out of town to finish my degree. In that new town, I was able to function for about three months or so, after which I fell back into my old ways. This move also put me closer to my big brother, who by now was a raging alcoholic. We moved in together, and I went to my first 12-step meeting in an effort to support his desire to arrest his addiction. I answered yes to 10 of their 12 questions but still felt very out of place there. I didn't think I was as messed up as the people I saw in that meeting. I know today that every addict has to find his own bottom, wherever that may be. While living with my brother I made new connections and resumed my familiar relationship with Mary Jane. I found myself partying harder and

feeling worse than ever. I continued to do or say things I regretted while I was loaded and really began to despise myself for it.

I redoubled my efforts to use people to try to feel better about myself, including girlfriends, employers, or anyone I could deceive. This only made me feel worse about myself. I was racked with guilt and ultimately ended a four-year relationship of convenience with a girl, which I should have never started. I remembered that first 12-step meeting and set out again to find help. I went to an MA meeting and really liked knowing that I wasn't the only person who was addicted to marijuana. MA meetings were very scarce at the time, and I was very tenuous about this new way of living. I managed to put short stints of clean time together only to relapse days, weeks, or months later.

When I graduated from college I got a good job as an analyst with a big corporation. I also decided to rent a room from an old using buddy. Looking back, I have no idea what I was thinking to make such a decision. Sure enough, only weeks after I had moved in, I found myself sneaking his weed and even scraping his bong to stay high. Living like this, I was not able to function in my new job and eventually resigned to "seek other opportunities."

I moved back to my hometown and resolved to get my act together. I started to attend 12 step meetings for both alcoholics and addicts regularly. I still felt superior to the people in those meetings and didn't believe my problem was as serious as theirs. Today, I have the freedom of knowing that I am no better nor less than any other person. In spite of this feeling of superiority, I looked for the things I had in common with the people in the meetings, listened for the things that I could use to stay clean and disregarded the rest. I stayed, and I even made friends with some meeting members.

After a couple of months of this I decided I needed to get out of town to do some soul searching, plus I needed to get a job and get out of my parent's house. I cashed out my savings account and went on an extended vacation. I was clean and sober when I

But for the Grace of God *concluded*

left, but I cut the trip short halfway through, so that I could go on one more drinking and smoking binge. This taught me a very important lesson about myself: I am an addict and an alcoholic.

I returned to my parents' house and sulked around for a couple more months when my mom asked a friend of hers who was an active member of a 12 step program for drug addicts to pay me a visit. He did along with three other recovering addicts. They told me "you never have to drink or use again, no matter what." I still have that big book my oldest brother gave me and three of these four guests signed that day. I have since done a couple of "90 meetings in 90 days" and have managed to stay clean and sober for 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, 1 year, eighteen months, and now 6 and ½ years respectively.

It takes what it takes to get on the path to recovery. My recovery has included multiple relapses, but the people I met in recovery (especially my sponsor) never gave up on me and always told me I was welcome and wanted. I really enjoyed the honesty I heard in the rooms of recovery, especially when I saw men getting honest about their feelings. I have a special place in my heart for MA because I can really relate to marijuana addicts. I know I am addicted to marijuana, even though it is not supposed to be an addictive drug. The 12 steps of MA have given me relief from my suffering and a wonderful new relationship with a higher power of my own understanding.

There are many "yets" (You're Eligible Too) in my life, like jails, institutions or early death as a result of my addiction that I don't have to experience, if I choose to recover and I am willing to let my Higher Power work in my life. Today when I see a street junkie, or a skid row bum, the first thought that comes to my mind is, "But by the Grace of God, there goes I." For this I am forever grateful to MA and the 12 steps of recovery!

Strictly Business

SUBMISSION DEADLINE NOW EARLIER

Attention readers, Bureau Chiefs, and fellow recovering addicts in general:

A New Leaf Publications has changed the deadline for submitting items to A New Leaf. In an effort to get each month's issue out earlier in the month, we now request that all materials – birthdays, stories, announcements, whatever – get to us by the 20th of the month preceding publication. Thanks!

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE!

It's the sharing of experience, strength and hope that keeps us sober in MA, so please take a little time to write something down and send it to A New Leaf. You can tell your story or pick a topic of interest, but either way we'd love to hear from you!

INTRODUCING "MA ORPHANS"!

(Note: A New Leaf Publications is not affiliated with and does not endorse this email list or its contents. Also, ANLP is not responsible in the event someone's anonymity is compromised by the use of the server. We share this announcement as a service to the fellowship.)

Hello all! I am Rockin' Rob, a recovering marijuana addict, and the new MAWS Trustee for New Meeting Outreach. With the help of Eric J. of Smokeless in Seattle, we have put together a MA Orphan List Server through Yahoo Groups. We have created this so that new meetings and orphan groups can share their experience, strength and hope with each other to make their meetings bigger and better. The Server provides a medium for group contacts to ask questions and voice concerns, and obtain answers or suggestions from those that reply within the Server. This can be done by simply using one easy email address to reach everyone on the Server. Sending concerns and questions to this address will generate a message to everyone listed, and a wealth of experience can be obtained as a result. And by some chance you lose a response that was replied to you, it can be easily looked up at the Home Page in the history section. This can be a highly useful tool for all concerned.

We currently have around 18 members signed up, and we are hoping to keep it growing. So if you are part of an Orphan Group, Chapter/charter or just a small group in a District that feels you might benefit from this, please drop me a line and I will have you added.

Peace and Love,

Rockin' Rob at MACANAAA@YAHOO.COM

MA WORLDWIDE

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

email: office@marijuana-anonymous.org

Thank Goodness for Progress

concluded

would make me feel better about myself.

Thank goodness I heard about "progress not perfection." Thank goodness I learnt that recovery is a journey, not a destination, and that we each walk our own path of healing, learning and growth, and that I did not need to compare myself with anyone else. Thank goodness I learnt about acceptance of others, about allowing others to be who they are and where they are without judgement. I learnt to be gentler on myself, to give myself the positive messages that I never heard as I was growing up, to accept that I am HUMAN and that I can never be perfect. And that I am OK. I have learnt to recognise and appreciate my OWN talents and qualities, without seeking approval from others. I have learnt to acknowledge and appreciate OTHERS (which of course I could never do before, because I would only see their faults and errors!). I have learnt to stop having expectations of others and therefore spending a lot of time being disappointed and frustrated when they didn't measure up.

I have learnt the value of "progress." I know that I MUST continue to learn and grow as a person, because that will keep me on the right track of mental, emotional and spiritual wellness, which is the most important thing in my life, and I have finally begun to acknowledge the progress I HAVE made along the way, instead of focusing on how much I still need to do or learn. There is plenty of time and there will continue to be plenty of opportunities for me to "progress."



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Tim	3/1/94	8 Years
Meredith	3/23/97	5 Years
Don C.	3/31/97	5 Years
Mike E.	3/5/99	3 Years
Ethan	3/28/01	1 Year!
Sheldon	4/15/96	6 Years
Clive	4/18/98	4 Years

District 3

Margee	4/29/96	6 Years
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District 4

Howard F.	4/3/92	10 Years
John K.	4/15/98	4 Years

District 5

Tom W.	4/12/91	11 Years
Keith K.	4/7/98	4 Years
Mike P.	4/13/99	3 Years

District 6

Carol R.	4/21/91	11 Years
Bonnie U.	4/4/93	9 Years
Susie C.	4/4/94	8 Years

District 6 cont'd

Melissa D.	4/4/99	3 Years
Dan L.	4/10/99	3 Years

District 7

Gary	2/14/00	2 Years
Chris B.	2/27/00	2 Years
Richard D.	3/11/96	6 Years
Ron H.	3/4/99	3 Years
Dawn	3/??/00	2 Years
Scott	3/2/01	1 Year!

District 11

Mike B.	4/18/94	8 Years
Tiffany F.	4/4/01	1 Year!

District 12

Eloise C.	2/20/00	2 Years
Liz A.	3/12/01	1 Year!
Adam G.	4/17/96	6 Years
Steve S.	4/24/96	6 Years

Arizona

Gwen G.	4/13/93	9 Years
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London

Michael K.	3/13/95	7 Years
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Celebrating 160 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!