

A NEW LEAF

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From the Archives Tony V. ANL 12/94

Almost nine years ago, I tried to stop smoking marijuana by checking in to a local treatment center, because my wife was going to kick me out of the house. I had been smoking for 28 years; most of the time hiding it from my religious friends, my relatives and especially my immediate family.

In that 28 years, I found that the person I had been hurting most was myself. I checked myself into treatment the day after Christmas, went through two weeks of intensive treatment for my usage, and came out saying I would never smoke again. Well, for the next seven years, I didn't. I stopped. Not because I knew better, or I knew it wasn't right, or that I would lose everything, but because my wife would get mad at me and maybe throw me out of the house. I was a "dry doper".

After seven years, I went to work at a friend's house. Seeing his stash on the table and drooling over it, He pulled it out and asked "Want some?" I said, "Today, I really feel like having some." We smoked early every morning for the next week; early because I wanted the smell to go away so I could go home by the end of the day without fear of being found out. I stopped a week later.

Seven months later, after not smoking again, I went to work for the same "friend". Again, we smoked daily for one week, but this time I really felt guilty. my

twelve year old daughter had just graduated from the DARE program. Graduation was that night. I went to the graduation after telling my friend that I wasn't going to smoke any more, and that it wasn't right. I went to the graduation in fear; fear that the dope sniffing dog that the officer brought with him that night was going to pick me out of the crowd. He didn't.

Two weeks later this "friend" showed up at my door at nine at night wanting me to come and do more work. I told him no. His reaction was that he was going to tell my wife that I had smoked with him and he kept trying to get into my house. finally I resorted to violence to get rid of him. I was really scared of what was to happen. I went into the house and she asked me what had happened. I told her the truth. first she stopped talking to me for a month. then I came home one day and she and the kids were gone.

Since this happened I have had to be tested regularly, lost my family, lived in a wood shed for 18 months, and lost a lot of self respect that I thought I had gained not smoking pot for the first seven years, Now I belong to MA, both heart and soul. My life has turned around. I've taken to working the steps. my friends and family treat me with respect now. I am recovering, not just not-using. I feel good about myself. I have always been spiritual, but always thought I could

do it on my own. Boy, was I wrong.

Recently, I found myself again in a situation of being around relatives who were smoking five times a day, at least. At first it didn't bother me, but after a few days, I got the scare of my life. Everyone went to work and I found myself searching for the bag of dope. After searching unsuccessfully, I realized what I was doing. I thought "The only person who will know is me.", then my second thought was, "Who am I fooling this is wrong!" I immediately got to the phone book and searched for something better, a meeting. Being in a different town, I didn't know where to go, but I found a twelve step program and by the grace of God, who is my higher power, I felt that I got back on the right track, remembering one thing "The program works if you work it". I think I will keep coming back. Thanks MA, for being there.

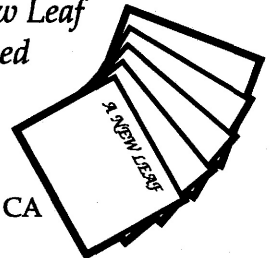
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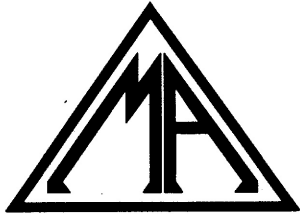
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A NEW LEAF

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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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H&I Observations Ira F.

Today we just finished our third year of H&I, speaking to the 9th graders (two days, sharing with over 150 kids) at Casa Grande High School, here in Petaluma, California.

I've been reflecting on what's changed in the last three years and what's come to mind is "The dumbing down of our school kids". There is definitely a pot epidemic going on at this school. When I asked how many kids smoked pot or knew of someone that did, at least 3/4 of the class raised their hands. Probably one of the most disturbing things for me was when I asked them how many of their parents smoked pot, almost 90% of their hands went up in the air. It was like, My parents are doing it, so why can't I. At the lunch break I was standing against a building and overheard a group of kids talking about the cool stuff they smoked the night before.

As we know, the THC level has shot up quite significantly over the years, with some disturbing research showing major effects to the physical body (besides what it robs us of spiritually and emotionally). As I looked out over the kids for the two days I really noticed how their sense of aliveness, curiosity and enthusiasm for life just wasn't there. It was like these kids were checked out, nobody was home. Thank God a couple of the teachers had that

fire of unselfish love burning inside them. One teacher mentioned how it was almost taboo to mention to her students about giving of yourself, and helping others!!!

I know its not my job to save these kids. I know we were there to just share our experiences around our use of marijuana. But damn, I was disturbed by what I saw. One 9th grader came into the room while we were fielding questions from the kids and the teacher brought up about this 9th grader's pot use. She seemed so non-chalant about it, almost proud of her usage. She said her mother said it was OK to do as long as she got good grades and didn't get in "trouble". The teacher let her go on about it, sort of like supporting her activities. What's going on here??? Am I becoming a hard ass about this?

One good story that came out of it was a teenager who shared that during a previous lunch period a kid offered her some pot and she said, "No way, I just heard them talk to us about marijuana and I'm not going to touch it!"

Hopefully some other kids will think twice about smoking weed after we shared our stories with their classmates. It makes me more and more grateful to have found a program for living through MA. Thank God!! ▲

Thoughts on Cross-Talk Dan L.

This week I have been pondering the subject of cross-talk. At one meeting I know of, the leader reads, "we define cross talk as talking while others are sharing, commenting on another persons share, giving advice or spontaneous outbursts." Another meeting reads, "the only appropriate comment is thanks for your share." Neither of these quotes is researched enough to call verbatim, but you get the idea.

When some person tells me how to live my life, I resent them. The same is true when people have told me things that I am going to experience. So many addicts are clairvoyant that THC could have some effect on our sixth sense. I doubt it. The quotes that stick out in my mind begin with

"we" or "I." Thinking about "449" or the "Promises" these passages do not tell me how to live. They tell me how another alcoholic/addict found serenity or recovery. The reason these verses are repeated at so many meetings is not an accident. They are non-judgemental. They are self-explanatory of the author. These excerpts give experience, strength and hope, not advice, criticism and expectation.

In the time I have been coming to M.A. I have learned to look for the similarities rather than the differences between myself and my fellow addicts. Believing that I am the only one who has had such a terrible experience in life is not healthy. These things I realize to be the truth. Why then, do I get

annoyed when a person follows my share with a statement, such as, "My _____ was just like that..." or "I was the same way..." ?! Maybe I don't like being reminded about how equal we all are in the fellowship. The desire to be unique still burns within me.

The blanket, mirroring statement rather than the intimate feelings of being JUST LIKE THAT is what makes my flesh crawl. "Me too" just doesn't seem like sharing to me. My messed up head thinks it's fine when a newcomer identifies with my share. The long timer says something along the same lines and I can't stand it. My reaction is unhealthy. We all came into the rooms with a problem. Maybe today that person I am annoyed with

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District 8

Bob H. 4/1/81 9 yrs.
 Kerry C. 4/15/97 3 yrs.

North Bay, CA

Ray 4/99 1 year!

Cross-Talk continued

woke up after 8 years of sobriety wanting a bong so bad they could taste it. I need to remember this while I sit there and judge this person's recovery.

Will I stop judging my fellow addict and thus, retain my serenity. No. I will TRY to retain my serenity by remembering

things taught to me in the rooms. This person's words, that I find so offensive, could be my higher power speaking to me. My hp is giving me the challenge to practice the principles of love, forgiveness and acceptance or be self centered and intolerant. ▲

A Work in Progress Erin O.

Often when I approach a newcomer, I avoid mentioning how long I have been clean and sober. Too often I've had people just stare at me and I can tell I've lost them. For a person who can't yet put together 24 hours of abstinence, 13 years must seem bizarre. When I first got clean, I remember a person having a year seemed amazing, Five seemed unreal. So can I blame a newcomer for not being able to relate to me. "Wow, you're totally cured," someone once said. But, of course, I'm far from cured. I have much more serenity and a lot more coping skills, not to mention a conscious contact with my higher power, but I'm far from cured. In fact, when I'm having a particularly hard time, I more often than not tend to only talk to my sponsor and a few close program friends about it.

More than once, I've experienced fellow members looking at me with skepticism and saying things like, "Man, and you have all that time. What's the point of staying clean if I'm

going to be unhappy?" As much as I try to explain that you don't get struck perfect because you get clean, that life and sobriety is a process, I get the feeling that I need to keep up an image of continual serenity and endless wisdom. This feelings is, of course, silly and impossible. But I get it just the same.

Sometimes it's hard to be 'the old lady of MA' as I've been called. Sometimes I want to be really anonymous and so I go to other twelve step programs where people have a lot more clean time than I do. Some times I need to go to more of those meetings than MA. But MA is my home, my drug of choice, my family. I love you guys even if you don't always understand me and what I need. Please try to remember that I too am a work in progress and am constantly learning and growing. As long as there are people wanting to quit smoking pot, I hope to be there to let them know it's possible to stay clean for a long, long time. ▲



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