



May 2003

Volume 13, Number 5

A NEW LEAF

A PUBLICATION OF MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS

I Was Imprisoned In A World of Misery by Michael S.

Marijuana entered my life in college, and my relationship with it grew serious very quickly. I became a daily user almost immediately. My friends were determined by it, and I chose where to live and what to do with my life based on how I could get the best green.

In my twenties, I used more and more. I refused to admit I had a problem, even though I raided my apartment mate's room and picked from his bag constantly. I convinced myself that I didn't need it. "At least I don't buy it all the time like he does." It was true. I just scammed it off everyone.

Years went by. I moved on past that friend and lived with others who didn't smoke. The outrageous smoking friends from college and my initial post-graduate years were now few and far between. I was smoking alone, and I was smoking constantly.

I worked at a store for a few years where taking breaks and getting high were commonplace for me. I "old-schooled" it. I used to ask my manager to run off to the store, then I'd buy a can of coke, dump it out, poke holes in it with a paper clip, hide behind the dumpster of the store parking lot and suck the pot into my lungs like a fiend. I taught myself to believe that I couldn't possibly work at that miserable job without being high, without taking these risks – risks in which there was no upside other than a few minutes of bizarre feelings and altered perceptions. I hid my breath, I hid my eyes, I hid my attitude and thoughts and my self from others around me.

I was miserable.

I got caught high one day at that job, so I quit on the spot rather than being shamed and fired.

I got a job working with mentally ill adolescents after that. It was a noble cause, and I learned a lot, but I still had the same thoughts: no way I can survive this job without pot. I didn't get high on the job quite as often, but as soon as my day was over, I hit the bong, pipe, joint, or coke can, depending on the situation. I didn't have a car, so I used to bum rides from co-workers. Once, I got a ride from a woman who asked if it was okay if she lit up in the car. Needless to say, I did what I could to get scheduled with her as often as possible.

I was still miserable.

I thought I needed to cut down, but I was lucky if I could get through a day. I couldn't associate with anyone without getting high while they were around. It was my air to breathe, my blood circulation, my way of life. I knew this couldn't go

on, but I had no idea what to do. And I felt completely out of control over my own actions and decisions.

One day, I got a full body massage from a reflexologist. She said that her techniques would rid my body of all of its toxins. I thought, "Great, I've got lots of toxins in me." I thought this might work. This might be the beginning of relief. Maybe it will be the spark of health I need to get clean. The massage was great, and she was right: all of this nasty, residual THC that was stuck in my bloodstream was suddenly released, and I went into a physically awful depression. I had to call my dealer and get it solved.

Every visit to that dealer was an embarrassment. Her home was a shambles. I didn't want to be there. But every time I offered her money, I stuck around, because I knew she would offer me a generous, bonus bong hit. Then I'd sit there and watch TV for a while because I didn't want to be rude, even though I absolutely didn't want to be there. So I'd try to make conversation, and my mind would go off into some weird, self-obsessive intellectual zone, and my dealer would always sit back and say, "Wow."

I used to throw out her number on a weekly basis. Then I'd look through the trash. Then, after so much repetition of this compulsion, I accidentally memorized her number. It didn't matter if I burned it; the number was stuck in my head. My brain was sewing my own demise.

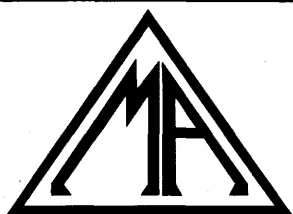
One day, as I was about to take my hour-long bus ride to work, I found myself sick and shaken up. I didn't want to buy, but the sour feeling in my body was so great that I called my dealer anyway. She wasn't there, so I was relieved. I couldn't buy now. But the bus to work went right past her door. I didn't want to, but I got out anyway. I banged on her door. She thought it was a cop, but I assured her it was only stoner me. She sold me a bag easily, and I left feeling worse. I walked back to the bus stop. I told myself this was it, I had to quit. This was the last time. I could not do this anymore. I had hit the wall. I went to a garbage can, and I threw out the entire bag.

concluded on page three

A Lovely Limerick

by Carol

There was an old addict named Carol
Who kept putting her life in peril.
She smoked pot night and day
'Till she tracked down MA.
Its program fits just like apparel!



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

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We send approximately 650 copies of A New Leaf each month to subscribers in 33 states and 3 foreign nations.

Conference Time Again

by Terri R.

Welcome from District 6, host of the 2003 MA World Services Conference. This year's Conference will be held over Memorial Day Weekend, May 24-26, 2003, at Woodbury University in Burbank, California.

Every member of MA is welcome to attend the Conference. The General Sessions and Sub Committee meetings held throughout the day are open to all. The Sub Committees this year will be Finance, Literature, Policies and Procedures, H&I/PI, and Online. Voting in the General Session is by trustees and delegates only.

On the eve of the Conference, Friday, May 23, there will be a welcome buffet/potluck dinner at the site of our regular Friday night meeting, All Saints Community Church in Sun Valley, just minutes from the Conference site. Additional events (to be announced) will be planned for Saturday and Sunday nights. More info can be found on the District 6 website at www.madistrict6.org

The first MA Conference I attended was in 1991. I had about 6 months sober and found I was confused, amazed and awe-struck by the level of commitment the trustees and delegates were exhibiting. They were giving up their holiday weekend, away from their families, to help MA. I helped out at subsequent Conferences, serving food and giving people rides. I started serving "officially" at the Conference in 1998, and I haven't left since.

The Conference is a great time to learn how to work together and practice Tradition One. When it's time to vote on a particular issue, Tradition 2 comes shining through. It may not always work out the way I want, but it's the way it's supposed to be (God's expression coming through in our Group Conscience). Then, after each day's work, we PARTY! It's a lot of fun to get to know people from MA all over the country. They say Conventions are fun and Conferences are work, but we find time to party, even at a Conference.

In the end, I always leave a Conference feeling good about myself. I gave my time, my effort, and my attention to help ensure that MA will be there for the addict who still suffers.

Remember, you can find out more about the Conference at www.madistrict6.org. Come by the Conference. Check it out. Help out. MA needs you.

CONTRIBUTE TO A NEW LEAF!

We literally can't do this without you. No contributions = no newsletter. And as of this month there are 611 people in 33 states and three foreign nations reading A New Leaf. So please take some time to contribute to the June issue in one of these ways:

Write your personal story of experience, strength and hope. **Write a poem** about recovery. **Share about Step 6**, "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." **Share about Tradition 6**, "MA groups ought never endorse, finance or lend the MA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose." **Answer the Roving Reporter question**, which for June is "What is one basic truth you have learned in recovery?" Or write anything else you want!

Thanks!

The recovering stoners at *A New Leaf*

I Was Imprisoned In A World of Misery

concluded

I wrote myself a note a work. I promised myself I would stop, that this was it, that I would never smoke again.

But a little stoned birdie whispered in my ear and told me I was lying. And on the hour-long bus ride back home, I stopped off at the dealer and bought another miserable, stinking, smelly bag of weed. And took my dandy time smoking it.

This was my path to my bottom. A few months later, I was to find MA and a newfound sobriety. I learned that there was no other way for me than MA, and that I could not do it alone. I have had long strings of clean time and repeated slips, but today I have just celebrated a year sober, and I still go to meetings regularly.

The thing I always learn when I go to meetings is that my bottom with pot was never bottom enough. I always had room to go lower. But I now know, in my heart of hearts, that there is a better way, that I can live healthy and sober and sane. I don't have to act crazy anymore, and I am so grateful to MA and its members for the help they have given me and for the wonderful life I have today. When I was in the middle of the madness, I had no idea this life was possible. I thought I was imprisoned in a world of misery. Now I thank God that the world of misery I experienced might be of help to someone else who is as desperate to get clean and sober as I had been.

The Roving Reporter

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

Here are more of the responses:

"It teaches me how to get out of my head and identify with other people. It was a big breakthrough for me to realize I could have fun and not be stoned."

— Colleen Q., Philadelphia

"For me, this was a fantastic shot in the arm. It got me in touch with my longing to let go of old behaviors and commit to positive action. The creativity workshop was probably the most powerful act of recovery I've seen."

— Tim, Berkeley

"Lots of love and laughter!"

— Marishka, Ashland, OR

"It reminds me I can still have fun in a caring and supporting environment. It gives me something to look forward to, and it serves as a reason not to smoke."

— Ethan, Oakland

"It reinforces a lot of the traditions and principles I've learned in the program."

— Craig, District 7

"It's totally motivating and super-charges me to continue working my program. It's very emotional. We just had the women's meeting, and I'm all weepy — but very happy!"

— Drea, Portland



"It made me realize you can have fun without getting high."

— Adam, Sonoma County, CA

There's nothing like being in a room full of potheads to support your individual efforts in recovery. The sobriety countdown is a celebration for all these people. And the women's meeting is where we get support for our own individual challenges. It's such an overwhelming feeling of not being alone. You totally feel loved and supported."

— Elizabeth, District 2

"It rejuvenates my recovery and strengthens the bonds, and it helps me to realize there are people who love me just the way I am."

— Raquel, District 2

"It gets me off my butt, away from the couch, and out of my head, and it takes me to a place where I can be myself and be happy, joyous and free — and fearful — at the same time."

— Alan, Las Vegas

For June, the Roving Reporter asks, "What is one basic truth you have learned in recovery?"

MA WORLDWIDE

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

"We thought Step 5 would be humiliating, but after taking it, we discovered it to be empowering. We found ourselves again. We tapped into a well of honesty about our pasts that gave us strength and hope for the present. Doing our Fifth Step brought us into the heart of the fellowship of MA."

— *Life With Hope*, page 24

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 1

Jim B.	4/22/93	10 years
Alex W.	4/29/96	7 years
Mike L.	2/23/99	4 years
John M.	3/1/01	2 years
Jenifer F.	5/18/01	2 years
Lori B.	1/11/02	1 year!
Megan	1/13/02	1 year!
Eric H.	1/18/02	1 year!
Tom L.	1/25/02	1 year!
Karissa S.	2/20/02	1 year!
Jymi S.	2/22/02	1 year!

District 2

Robin	3/29/89	14 years
Sheldon	4/21/96	7 years
Don C.	2/28/97	6 years
Meredith	3/23/97	6 years
Suki	5/26/97	6 years
Raquel	5/26/99	4 years
Dave S.	2/1/00	3 years
Andrew	3/25/02	1 year!
Yasmine	4/18/02	1 year!

District 3

Bob E.	5/17/96	7 years
Lily E.	5/17/96	7 years
Steve W.	5/03/98	5 years

District 3 (cont'd)

Dana S.	5/14/02	1 year!
Brent W.	5/30/02	1 year!

District 4

Brian T.	4/13/02	1 year!
Chris L.	4/4/02	1 year!

District 5

Norm B.	5/30/83	20 years
John R.	5/7/87	16 years

District 6

Carol R.	4/21/91	12 years
Bonnie V.	4/4/93	10 years
Sandy L.	5/29/94	9 years

District 7

Mary Q.	2/15/99	4 years
Dan L.	4/10/99	4 years
Laurie M.	3/24/02	1 year!

District 8

Vicki A.	4/7/02	1 year!
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District 10

Charlotte M.	5/6/89	14 years
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District 11

Craig S.	5-27-87	16 years
Sharlene D.	5-1-97	6 years
Dannie D.	5-23-98	5 years
Danno O.	5-31-01	2 years

Grays Lake, Illinois

Joe	5/10/98	5 years
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Santa Cruz, CA

Chrysanthemum	5/6/01	2 years
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Celebrating 228 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!