



MAY 2005

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# A NEW LEAF

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*My father has been struggling with his alcohol use, and invited me to check in with him about it from time to time. Recently I wrote him a long letter as part of my checking in. Here is an excerpt from that letter:*

Dad, here are some stages I went through in my own use of marijuana and alcohol:

Wanting to stop, but not really being able to, and then finding ways of justifying my use, or adapting to continued use by deciding I *could* stop if I *really* wanted to.

Quitting, but then deciding that a temporary cessation was more than enough to 'prove a point', followed by a return to using/drinking that continued to compromise parts of my life that I valued, in spite of having taken a break.

Sometimes these breaks I took allowed me tastes of real health and joy, but I didn't allow myself to associate those good feelings with having stopped using. Instead, I would rationalize that my increased health and joy provided an acceptable platform for a return to drinking and or smoking pot.

I would often be able to significantly cut down or stop my use if I was engaged in something that had some combination of being demanding and rewarding. If I was getting some of my good strokes somewhere else, and particularly if getting those strokes demanded that I be lucid, I could often stop or modify my use. But as soon as those strokes were reduced, or the demands were not so much to my liking, I would turn back to more insistent self medication in order to compensate myself.

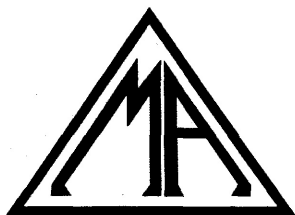
All the while, I was desperately convinced that my access to alcohol and pot were vital tools for living, if not for others, certainly for me. Weirdly, this feeling existed right along side the hunch I had that my use was actually hurting me and damaging things I cared about. I had no faith that living clean and sober would actually remove the very problems that I medicated using pot and alcohol. I assumed that quitting would just make those problems more exposed and more miserable. And for a little while at the beginning, that's just how it felt, but then things got better and better, and now it's just

completely clear that the using was always making things worse.

Toward the end of my pot use, I wanted more and more desperately to quit, but I kept proving to myself that I simply couldn't stop on my own. (Ironically, I was simultaneously looking desperately for 'healthy ways' that I might keep using.) In spite of having incredible opportunities, life dreams, really, laid before me, (the pilot's license, the Amati case project), and in spite of the increasing certainty that I would fail at these things if I were to keep using, I still couldn't do it. I somehow thought if I couldn't do it myself, it wasn't worth doing. I'm not sure exactly what the obsession was with needing to quit on my own. This didn't make any real sense. I hadn't insisted on getting a degree without a college or any teachers, or learning to drive by climbing in a car myself. Why couldn't I use the wisdom of millions of people who had gone before me in order to deal with my smoking and drinking? Eventually, I became scared enough by what was happening that I was willing to turn to others for help, and within minutes of doing it, my only regret was not having done it sooner.

You know, I 'hung on' to alcohol for almost six months, even after I had quit marijuana, because it was a more socially acceptable drug to use, and dear god, I didn't want to have to admit that alcohol was a problem *also*. Hadn't I done enough by ditching my true love, pot? Couldn't my alcohol use help remind me that I was an adult, in control, capable of rewarding myself in good measure? No, it couldn't. In the absence of my primary drug of choice, my drinking quickly developed, or showed itself to already have, many of the worst characteristics of my pot use. If I wanted a clear life, unthreatened by addiction, it had to go too. When I finally decided to get a sponsor in MA, he asked me to quit drinking as a condition of his being willing to sponsor me, and I was relieved that someone was willing to bring it up. Having his counsel in my life was finally more important than having one last drug to struggle with.

by Scobie



## 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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 31 states

My name is Travis, and I'm a stoner, a pothead, a weed addict, whatever you like to call it.

I really love saying all that.

At the 2005 M.A. Convention, I went to my first MA meeting. Though I was a pot smoker foremost in my resume of addictions, I had never been to MA in my 10 years of recovery.

When I got clean and sober in 1994, I hit my bottom on alcohol and found myself comfortably learning the steps in AA. In that program, I've heard people talk about the "marijuana maintenance program", wherein they quit drinking and maintained composure by smoking pot every day. I had done my last six months the other way around. In the summer of 1994, I ran into a bit of a weed drought - not because of any market forces, but because of a lack of friends willing to hang out with me. By lucky coincidence, I had also just turned 21, and could buy liquor legally. So, I took up an "alcohol maintenance" program, wherein I drank every day in the absence of smoking weed. For anyone considering this, I don't recommend it.

In any case, I came into the 12 step program, followed directions, did what was recommended, and have reaped a host of benefits into my life today that I wouldn't have even known to ask for. I have a foundation upon which to return for serenity in my day to day life. I'm married to "one of us" for four years, and have a lovely little girl who shines more light in a single smile than all the jewels of kings.

I remember clearly a meeting that I went to in San Diego at around 90 days clean and sober. I was sharing about smoking weed from a wooden podium in a wood paneled room, through a microphone and speakers to a small crowd in plastic chairs, when an old-timer raised his voice and interrupted me. "Stop talking about that stuff in here." he said. "It doesn't belong here. Take it to another meeting." Of course, I've since studied the traditions, and understand the principal of his action. But, at the time I was crushed. I wanted to cry. I felt as if the new family, that I finally fit into, was rejecting me.

To this day, I believe that action of this old time was inappropriate and rude, but it served its purpose. I learned my lesson. Right, wrong, or indifferent, I have kept my pot smoking past quiet for the majority of my recovery.

Going to the MA 2005 convention, my first exposure to the fellowship, was for me a second homecoming in recovery. Here were people introducing themselves as "pot addicts", "stoners", "weed heads", even "bong technicians". At my banquet table, we discussed everything from the best (and worst) of marijuana cinema, and the complexities of water pipe engineering technology, to the effectiveness of various scraping tools, and the advantages of the integrated wire rolling paper. I had a wonderful time among the stoners, a group to whom I fully belong.

I was very impressed by the progressive variety of the conference program, ranging from the traditional step workshop to creativity workshops, a free writing session, and a drum circle. It struck me that we stoners, and moreover ex-stoners in recovery, represent a unique cultural demographic among the 12-step community. The difference is subtle, but worthy of note, as it made such a difference in my perception of the group's hospitality. The stories are perhaps less prone to violence, and more appreciative of "groovy sounds". Or, as the Friday night speaker put it: "I never really got caught, or got into any trouble — of course - I never LEFT THE HOUSE!"

My sincerest thanks belong to all who organized and participated in this event. While I may have been a long time coming, I certainly am grateful to have found MA!

# The Roving Reporter



For this month the Roving Reporter asked, "What's your favorite story in Life With Hope and why?" Here is what a few had to say:

When I first got clean, all I had was this book. I can relate to so many of the stories. "I'm Not an Addict" spoke to me because no one knew I was an addict. The stories helped encourage me to start a meeting. *Angel, Hawaii*

I read "My Best Thinking" recently and several parts really hit home. *Collette R., Dallas*

"The God Thing" – I read that one because I always said I had a Jesus thing, it was the same. I struggled with a particular religion, so it spoke to me. *Sheila B., Philadelphia*

Yes, we have a story night, one night a month at one of our meetings so I'm pretty sure I've read them all (possibly more than once). I still relate to "Slave to Marijuana" the most, so I guess that's my favorite. *Matt*

Yes, I get something helpful and validating from each story, each time I read them. *Jennifer L., Philadelphia*

For May, the Roving Reporter asks, "What is the hardest step for you to work and why?" Thank You.

## Decision Inventory:

by Anonymous,

I called my sponsor to seek guidance on a particular issue I was going through. I needed to make what I considered a difficult decision about changing my sobriety date. My sobriety date remained the same and I am grateful the decision did not come from myself alone. Sponsors are a great source of wisdom and a resource to help us make difficult decisions. In this particular, high-profile case I wanted my sponsor to give me the answer; that was not the case.

I now realize that in M.A. we share our experience, strength and hope, as opposed to advice, criticism and admonishment. The decision I had to make was my own and the best guidance available was from within; our more religious members might call it God. My sponsor did me a great service by not proselytizing their opinion of sobriety and how to best work the program. The book Life With Hope reminds us that we find common spiritual principals, but we do that in our own special way. I was given a way to inventory my ideas, to share these findings with God through another human being and to make this decision based on spiritual principals.

The following assignment helped me get in touch with my intentions and motives. I was able to better understand how my decision would affect my life as it relates to recovery. This assignment was so work-intensive that I knew I better have a real important subject before I undertake it.

**What do I gain by \_\_\_\_\_ ?**  
3-6 examples

**What does \_\_\_\_\_ cost me?**  
3-6 examples

**What do I gain from not \_\_\_\_\_ ?**  
3-6 examples

**What does not \_\_\_\_\_ cost me?**  
3-6 examples

**Is my decision based on God or Ego?**  
3-6 examples

**Is my decision based on Love or Fear?**  
3-6 examples

**Is my decision Justified or healed?**  
3-6 examples

**Does my decision make me happy or right?**  
3-6 examples

This exercise is called a Decision Inventory. When faced with a difficult decision, I give this to my sponsees to access a source of wisdom more qualified than me. I hope it can be as useful to you as it was for me.

# MA WORLDWIDE

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

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## 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 6

Bonnie V.	4/04/93	12 years
Carol R.	4/21/91	14 years
Dan L.	4/10/99	6 years
Walter T.	4/12/03	2 years
Alli D.	5/12/04	1 year!
Casey K.	5/11/01	4 years
Doug D.	5/09/01	4 years
George L.	5/13/91	14 Years
Joey	5/12/98	7 Years
Lisa M.	5/12/03	2 years
Sam S.	5/04/02	3 Years

### District 11

Dan T	4/06/03	2 years
Craig S	5/27/87	18 years
Eric M	4/10/03	2 years
Bill K	3/11/04	1 year!
Yes	4/24/04	1 year!

### District 12

Bryan	5/04/04	1 year!
Carrie M.	5/16/03	2 years
Jose S.	5/21/02	3 years

### District 8

Vicky A.	4/07/02	3 years
Coco R.	4/13/00	5 years
Paul B.	3/31/04	1 year!
Darren D.	3/25/99	6 years
Leo W.	2/03/03	2 years
Mark G.	2/17/03	2 years

### District 13

Joe	5/10/98	7 years
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### Houston, TX

Sara A.	5/20/00	5 years
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### District 3

Kim K.	5/20/04	1 year!
Lily E.	5/17/96	9 years
Ben	5/30/02	3 years
Bob E.	5/17/96	9 years
Brent W.	5/30/02	3 years
Steve W.	5/03/98	7 years

### District 7

Bruce W	3/24/90	15 years
Aimee	4/10/04	1 year!
Richard D	3/01/96	9 years
Mike C	3/25/93	12 years
Laurie M	3/24/02	3 years

### District 5

Norm B.	5/30/83	22 years
Sean F.	5/11/02	3 years
Adam H.	3/12/04	1 year!

**Celebrating 228 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!**