



A NEW LEAF

July 1995

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The True Meaning of Service Discovered

by Ilene M., District 6

To be honest, I really didn't plan on having that much to do with the annual MA Conference. The very word conjured up several dreary images: long tables, littered with coffee cups and crumpled papers; tedious meetings, full of tedious subjects and opposing viewpoints; and the dreaded cloud of Robert's Rules of Order (aieeeee!) casting palpable gloom over all of the proceedings. In a word:

BORING. Besides, I didn't *have* to go, did I? I wasn't a trustee or a delegate (whatever those were). I was just a lowly newcomer with seven months. What could all of that business stuff have to do with me?

Well, I did end up attending. Why? Because I was needed. My home meeting needed someone to organize volunteers for one of the meals at the Conference, and, having heard repeatedly that service was an integral part of recovery, I agreed to take on the task. I had already surrendered to the program; part of that surrender meant taking the advice of those whose recovery I admired. And service was something they all strongly recommended. I had experienced service only at the meeting-level. It was good to feel needed, to be the provider of hot caffeine, to buy cookies, or spread literature on a table. But so far, I hadn't experienced much of what others called the true meaning of service. I definitely kept my commitments, but let's just say I was not always cheerful and joy-filled while doing them. Maybe service at this level would be different. So I volunteered.

Before I knew it, I had volunteered

for even *more* service. The incredible food committee (a dynamic father and son duo) needed help with food preparation, since health codes prohibited us from preparing the food at the site. No problem, I thought.

"I discovered so much about what service is for: to get us out of ourselves, to learn that we can be useful even when we are feeling most useless..."

They shouldn't have to do it all themselves---*I'll be glad to help*. I was told to be at their house at 5:30 in the morning. No problem---excuse me? That's when I usually go to bed! I am most definitely not a morning person. But, something in me decided to go ahead and do it. Because it had been suggested, and because the help was truly needed.

The weekend of the Conference turned out to be kind of a bad time for me. I was obsessed with my own problems and busy not being grateful. Something funny happened, though, almost as soon as I slipped on those lovely rubber cafeteria-lady gloves and started wrapping sandwiches. I forgot about my own drama. I started joking around and having fun, despite my desire to stay in my cranky morning

mode. I even found myself getting a little excited about what the Conference would actually be like. I knew I really just had to serve breakfast and then I could go home, but my sponsor had told me that I might find the literature committee interesting. Even though I was worried about what I could contribute, having just barely read the

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Greetings From Central Park!

by Richard B., Dist. 8

I'm sitting in the plaza at Delacourt Fountain on this first really warm spring day. The temperature is almost 70°, the sun is shining brightly and the sky is a deep blue. A gusty breeze blows through every once in a while, showering unsuspecting sun worshippers with the spray from the fountain.

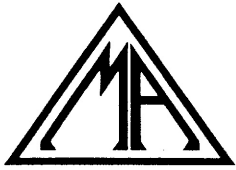
It reminds me of a parable I read many years ago. Seems the sun and the wind were arguing about who was stronger (my guess is the wind was boasting and the sun called his bluff). Anyway, the wind picked this poor guy walking down the road and boasted that

he could blow the man's coat off with his strong gusts. The sun said he could take the man's coat off faster than the wind. Well, the wind got all puffed up and blew as hard and as long as he could, but of course the poor guy just clutched his coat tighter about him. When the wind gave up, the sun came out and made things all nice and warm and non-threatening and the guy shed his coat immediately.

Sound familiar?

There's a lesson here for me about willpower. More than once during my 25+ years of smoking marijuana, I promised myself that I would quit. I'd

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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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A Collection of Views and Opinions from Around the Fellowship

What situation has brought you closest to using?

How did you stay sober?

Richard A., Dist.3, 5½ yrs.

I recently ended a 4½ year relationship. This has been extremely difficult and I found my disease starting to take over my mind again. Because of the love of true friends in the program, the 12 Steps, and the love, trust, and belief in my Higher Power, I am finding the love and strength that the program taught me was there. I am grateful to MA for saving my life one more Day At A Time!

Neil, Dist.1, 3 yrs.

Relationships, Relationships, Relationships!!! I wasn't ready after a year to have one. In fact, I took this unwritten rule literally. I waited a year and ten days to have my first relationship in recovery.

When it fell apart, my program wasn't strong enough and neither was my self-esteem. I wanted to smoke. Thank god, for God and the people in the

program for keeping me sane. I didn't have to smoke and was able to share my feelings in a safe place.. the rooms of Marijuana Anonymous.

Terri R., Dist.6, 4½ yrs.

I have been close to using a few times during my sobriety. Every one of those times were occasions when I was experiencing HALT - Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired. I stayed sober by slowing down and taking care of myself: getting enough to eat, enough sleep,

calling my sponsor, and reopening myself to my Higher Power, which helps me to let go of resentment.

Bernie G., Dist.9, 3 yrs.

I had strained my shoulder and was in constant pain. I remembered how pot was so "good" in pain killing, and my mind was saying that your body is hurt, and it would be better if the pain was relieved. But also, I had to get some work done, and if I smoked, I would be out of pain, but I wouldn't be able to get things done. So, I went the chiropractor route and the problem was solved in two weeks. I didn't have to use.

Bob E., Dist.3, 7 yrs.

My anger! When I get in a situation where my anger reacts heavily, my desire becomes "getting high and getting out of this place." Whenever I find myself in this place, with my anger trying to run my

reactions, I try to recognize this by "taking my emotional pulse" and recognizing the cause of my anger. Then I pray to my Higher Power for serenity and the ability to work through this problem. I then look at the situation from a "problem free" point of view. I deal with it in the best way I have at that time. Afterwards, I thank my Higher Power for my sobriety and continue on. Sometimes I just get away from the problem. That may be the only way.

The Roving Reporter

Can't See The Forrest For The Treez

Note from the Eds.

Oops. The answer to the question "Why did you misspell forest so many times in the June issue?" is "Because we are human and we screwed up". Also, for some unknown reason, spell-check did NOT catch it. And, yes, we quite frequently get the punctuation on the wrong side of the quotes. And, yes, there is AT LEAST one goof per issue, sometimes more. Sometimes they're great big ones and sometimes they're little ones.

We're trying for perfection, but progress is the best we can do at this time. We are not professionals. By late in the evening the last Sunday of the month, after an 8 to 10 hour day of trying to make things we've already typed up fit on these pages, we're so blind it's a wonder the Birthdays get in right side up. We don't mind folks telling us "oops you goofed" but we do think asking us WHY we goofed is sorta self-explanatory. Thank you for letting us share! ☺

The True Meaning of Service.....

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available literature myself, I was sort of looking forward to seeing just how decisions about our literature were made.

As soon as people started to arrive for breakfast, my excitement started to grow. It was fascinating to see people there from all over the place, sober marijuana addicts *that I had never met before!* Since our fellowship is so small, I had somehow gotten the silly idea that I knew everybody in MA! Not at all so. Here were people from other states, some even from the East Coast, who were all getting sober in MA, just like me. The after-breakfast meeting was great. Imagine---new stories and shares! In different accents even. I was tired, but I felt energized and thrilled.


Working with the literature committee was another remarkable experience. I got a behind-the-scenes view of how our literature is produced (in a nutshell, word-by-painstaking-word!). Yes, there were arguments, but I got to express my opinion too. And people were actually interested in what I had to say. Sitting in that meeting room, I felt more a part of MA than ever before. We all shared ideas, our tempers flared at times, we laughed and sighed and got exhausted. But there was a sense in the room that what we were doing was important, and would last. The business that goes on at an MA Conference, I started to realize, was quite far from boring (the idea I had held "prior to investigation"). Basically, the Conference and the nuts-and-bolts decisions that get made there insure the future of our fellowship. Although the small size of MA can have its down side, it also gives us all an incredible opportunity to be a part of its growth and development. The ideas and opinions that we contribute now will endure; they will be there in the future to help the addicts who haven't even smoked their first joint yet.

The main goal of the Literature Committee was to complete our version of the 12 & 12. I learned that this

document had been worked and re-worked for years. Dozens of addicts had contributed words and ideas, and hundreds of hours had been spent to create a definitive text that would guide the still-suffering addict out of the specific fog caused by marijuana addiction. No longer will we have to tell newcomers to replace the word "alcohol" with "marijuana" in the 12 & 12. We will be able to give them a book written just for us, a book called "LIFE WITH HOPE - A Return to Living Through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Marijuana Anonymous". Our book.

After much hard work, the committee was finally satisfied. But we still had to get approval from the General Assembly, comprised of all the Trustees and Delegates. If they did not approve, it would be at least another year of work before the document would be made available throughout the fellowship. We were all quite nervous, and could hardly contain our joy when our work was approved, *unanimously!* I got goosebumps.

In years to come, I will be able to tell newcomers "Why, when I was your age, we didn't even have our own book! We had to walk 20 miles barefoot through the snow to buy some other book! And, I was there the day this book was approved. Yes, I remember it well....."

The energy I got from that first day carried me through the weekend. I ended up preparing food all three days, attending committee meetings, general sessions, meetings, and parties. I really got to know some of the members from other areas, and particularly felt good about knowing that if ever I was in their town, I would have someone to call, someone to go to a meeting with. I discovered so much about what service is for: to get us out of ourselves, to learn that we can be useful even when we are feeling most useless, to feel a part of something bigger than we are and whose purpose is to help others. After that weekend, I felt better than I had felt in a long time. The Conference marked the beginning of my real comprehension of the true goals of our fellowship. I learned about service - by doing it even when I didn't want to. I learned about fellowship - from sharing with other addicts, strangers who became friends almost as soon as I heard them say "I'm a marijuana addict". I learned about unity - from sitting in rooms with addicts from all over, who were all giving their time and energy so that MA would remain strong and effective. And mainly, I experienced recovery: my own, my fellow addicts', and most importantly, the recovery that would take place tomorrow due to the work we did at the Conference today. 

Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!



| | | | | | |
|----------------|--------|---------|-------------|--------|---------|
| Edward | Apr.08 | 5 Years | Mike G. | Jul.07 | 8 Years |
| Frank C. | Jun.01 | 1 Year! | Joni W. | Jul.09 | 2 Years |
| Mark F. | Jun.02 | 5 Years | Rebecca P. | Jul.10 | 1 Year! |
| Libby S. | Jun.06 | 5 Years | Morgan A. | Jul.11 | 7 Years |
| Jerry S. | Jun.06 | 4 Years | Sheila F. | Jul.19 | 7 Years |
| Jim G. | Jun.13 | 1 Year! | Patricia G. | Jul.25 | 5 Years |
| Terrorist John | Jul.02 | 4 Years | Andrea S. | Jul.25 | 2 Years |
| Chris W. | Jul.04 | 4 Years | | | |

A Better Use For Zip-Lock Baggies

by Lance D., W.S.Conf. Food-Chair

To all involved in serving and preparing food for the '95 World Service Conference, I'd like to express my deepest admiration and gratitude for your help in making this part of the Conference flow with hardly a glitch. A lot of planning went into it. Two or three people from different meetings came to help prepare, serve, and clean up after each meal.

Special thanks to Ilene for her commitment to be at our home at 5:30 am each day to help prepare and wrap all the food. I don't know how it would have turned out had she not been there each day to help me and my partner (and father), Jack. She was truly of service. It all came together as a result of a "joint" effort of many people. You know who you are! Thank you.

Here are some facts and figures about what we used and consumed at the Conference and accompanying events: 343 coffee cups, 625 plates, 282 bowls, 335 ziplock baggies, 9 extra large trash bags, 20 sets of gloves, 206 sets of plastic-ware, 285 packets of sweetener, 168 bagels, several huge boxes of cereal, salsa, 19

loaves of bread, 12 lbs of ham, 12 lbs of turkey, 9 lbs of roast beef, 6 lbs of salami, 150 slices of cheese, 8 lbs of tuna, 240 bottles of drinking water, 10 more gallons of water for coffee, 264 cans of soda, over 100 bottles of juice and sparkling water, 195 cartons of milk, 600 lbs of ice, 24 cans of tea, lots of condiments, lots of coffee, 50 ounces of sugar, 180 sq.ft. of foil, yogurt, salad dressing, 7 dozen muffins, donuts, 1500 feet of plastic wrap, 20 lbs of oranges, 22 tomatoes, 12 lbs of apples, 15 lbs of bananas, many lbs of chips, 100 ounces of cream cheese, 27 lbs of mixed salad, lots of butter, 8 lbs of lox, and a bunch of pretzels. THAT ABOUT COVERS IT!

Needless to say, a lot of people put in a lot of hard work and unselfish donation of their time into making this a success. I feel honored that I was given the opportunity to assist. I didn't get much of a chance to attend many meetings in their entirety, but I did manage to find time to pop in and out of many. I did have many opportunities to meet new faces and it felt great. I really enjoyed the chance to help keep everyone happy and full. ☺

Central Park

Continued From Page 1

go so far as to gather up all the paraphernalia and pot in my apartment and take it down to the Hudson River early in the morning and ceremoniously throw it away. I could only do this, by the way, when I was high - never straight! Of course, by the end of the day I'd gone out and bought a new pipe, or a package of rolling papers and I was back in business. I felt awful! What was wrong with me?

What was wrong was that my will power, like the wind, wasn't enough to make me quit. It wasn't until I found these rooms and began to learn the power of surrendering my will to a power stronger than myself that I finally got some real sunshine in my life. ☺

BULLETIN BOARD

SO.CALIF.- CONVENTION '96! - District 7 (LA South) is asking for ALL of us to help. Sunday July 9th from 7-9 pm the first organizational meeting for the 2nd Annual MA Convention will be held at Crescent Heights United Methodist Church, 1296 N. Fairfax Ave. (corner of Fountain) in West Hollywood. Convention discussions, proposed sites, and elections for committee heads. For more info call Todd E. (310)281-9504, or Stephen S. (213)850-1841.

SO.CALIF. - Campout! July 14th thru 16th at Leo Carrillo Campground. As of this printing, there is room for three more people. For info call Lance D. (818) 340-4320.

SO.CALIF. - Campout! July 20th thru 23rd at Marion Mountain Campground in Idyllwild. Bring your own firewood and all supplies. \$7 per car, per night. Reservations are recommended. Call (800) 444-7275.

SO.CALIF. - Campout! Sept. 15th thru 17th at Palomar Mountain in San Diego county. \$10 per person for both nights. Kids under 12 free. Call Mike LB at (714) 547-3693 for more info & directions.

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