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A NEW LEAF

A Publication of Marijuana Anonymous

Marijuana Addiction Is Deadly

By Sheryl C. Vermont

Today I came home from the Farmer's Market to see the town doctor and several officers from the sheriff's department all gathered across the street. Turns out my neighbor shot himself to death. He was a pot-head.

When I moved to Vermont four years ago, I was using and Jim was clean. We talked about marijuana addiction. I told him it was ruining my life and I couldn't stop. He said his life had been just like that but he hadn't used in five years. Jim was schizophrenic - heard voices - but his psychosis was controlled with medications. He was looking at colleges, interviewing for jobs. He was fit and looked well. He hadn't had a psychotic episode since he stopped smoking pot. He had problems, like we all do, but his life was manageable.

A few months after Jim moved in, two guys who sold pot for a living moved into an adjacent apartment, and Jim started using again. The change in Jim was immediate and dramatic. He gained weight, he had dark circles around his eyes, he forgot about school and work, he kept having psychotic episodes that would land him in the local psychiatric hospital, and he constantly craved marijuana. He came over to my

house asking for it on more than one occasion, but I was so alarmed by his obvious downward spiral that even when I was using I wouldn't give it to him (told him I didn't have any). I was willing to kill myself, but I didn't want to contribute to his destruction.

Then, finally, I got into recovery. Since there are no Marijuana Anonymous meetings in my area (and my attempt to start one didn't get off the ground) I got clean and sober in A.A. When I had about six months clean and sober, I talked to Jim about sobriety and how abstinence and a spiritual program had transformed my life. He said it wouldn't work for him because of the schizophrenia. I reminded him of what he'd been like when he first moved here; how together he'd been when he was five years clean. But somehow he couldn't see it, or couldn't believe he could get back to it. He had no hope that it could ever get better. He drove to the store and bought a pistol. He put the pistol in his mouth and he pulled the trigger. And now that sweet, gentle man is gone. Now there's really no hope.

Jim's suicide fills me with many feelings, but most of all sadness. It did not have

to be this way. Sobriety doesn't mean instant happiness, but it does mean manageability. We all have problems, but as long as we're clean and sober these problems are manageable, just as Jim's schizophrenia was when he was drug-free. But when we are using, our problems, whatever they are, become completely unmanageable.

I saw Jim's descent with my own eyes. Jim died of marijuana addiction- clear and simple. When he was clean he was managing his problems and moving forward. When he started using again, his life got so completely unmanageable that the only way out he could see was suicide.

I spoke to two people in the program today about Jim's death and both said the same thing: "It could have been me; it could have been you. I am grateful for my recovery". Most people who suffer from addiction never get into recovery. And most people who do find the rooms do not stay. When I hit my bottom, I got into recovery. When Jim hit his bottom, he ended his life. Today I am clean and sober. I have one year and three weeks of continuous sobriety, and I thank God for granting me that grace.



Share your experience with meditation!! Write to
A NEW LEAF and pass it on!! Please send all articles to:
A NEW LEAF P.O. Box 4314 North Hollywood, CA, 91617



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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Send all articles, inquiries and
correspondence to:

A NEW LEAF

P.O. Box 4314

North Hollywood, CA 91617

Email: ANuLeaf@aol.com

Editorial Phone #:
(818) 353-5537

Fax #:

(818) 990-2980

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Purim Story (cont. from June)

by Anonymous

I got my own apartment where I could hide out, and on March 15, 1997 I swallowed 200 pain reliever tablets. Appropriately, I smoked marijuana to help me with the nausea. If my mother had not called me that day to invite me for dinner, I would probably not be alive. I was taken to the hospital where I was initially disappointed to find my attempt had failed.

One day in group therapy we talked about places to go to make friends. I had almost no friends so my ears pricked up. Someone suggested going to twelve step groups. I remembered going to some of these twelve step groups in the past, and thought that I could try again. I might even benefit from the discussions.

I chose Marijuana Anonymous because of my bad experiences with the drug, and my desire to quit (though really almost twelve step group would have worked). What I needed was a chance to fellowship with other people with problems in a positive atmosphere. MA allowed me to hear other people's shares and realize I am not the only one with problems. And sharing my "deep-dark secrets" with the group and seeing their acceptance allowed me to feel okay about myself and less isolated.

I found myself making friends. "Normal" people outside of twelve step groups talked about sports, cars, current news events, or other neutral subjects; whereas I needed to be with people where I could talk about real issues like the pain in my life. These people became my best friends, whom I could confide in, laugh with, and goof off with.

The time came for me to get a sponsor and seriously start working the program. He got me started with steps one, two, and three and I had the kind of transforming spiritual experience talked of in the Big Book. I came to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. That power helped me to quit marijuana and alcohol. He gave me strength,

Dearest A New Leaf,

I can't say thank you enough! Through snail mail (with Marijuana Anonymous) and your publication, my life is getting better one day at a time. It's such a miracle that it's beyond my wildest dreams.

I live in a small rural community in upstate NY (Fly Creek population 800 or so) and so my contact with other recovering potheads (other than online, in the mail, and *A New Leaf*) is limited; but through the grace of the Higher Power, I haven't had to pick up a drink or a drug since May 30th of last year. Thank Goodness that there are others in recovery here (five miles outside of Cooperstown NY). But even though I'm hopeful and have the meeting starter's stuff, I have not quite been able to start an MA meeting.

Anyway, I love what your doing and it's helped me a great deal..Praline M.'s Top Ten was my favorite part of the March issue that I just opened and read. I'm deeply indebted to you and my neighbor Kate S. for introducing me to the MA program. I love *A New Leaf*.

So Grateful, Geoffrey G.

I just completed step four, my moral inventory. It has helped me to clear up some of the issues cluttering my mind. I've learned that when I do acts of service I get outside myself and forget my pain. I also find that journal-writing, reading the Big Book, and meditation help my program.

Today I am drug and alcohol free. I do not miss them at all because they have been replaced by better things. I have a program and good friends that feel like family. My career is starting to work out, I have not had a suicidal thought for over a year and I feel nothing but hope for myself and for others in twelve step programs. I relate my experiences closely to the Jewish holiday Purim, based on the book of Esther, where many terrible and seemingly hopeless events led to an ultimate good.

I want to ask you, if any of you are having thoughts of ending your life, please wait. I came dangerously close to ending a beautiful life.

The Traditions Checklist will return next month...If you have any questions or ideas for Traditions Four through Eleven write to us.

Congratulations to Our Members Celebrating Their Sober Birthdays!

District 3

Daniel E.	5/6/97	1 year
David R.	5/6/97	1 year
Elliot P.	5/11/97	1 year
Bob E.	5/17/96	2 years
Lily E.	5/17/96	2 years
Gary F.	5/27/97	1 year
Erica H.	6/8/88	10 years
Douglas K.	6/10/88	10 years
Dean V.	6/11/90	8 years
Jerry P.	6/27/93	5 years

District 4

Mary M.	5/29/95	3 years
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District 5

Josh	6/13/97	1 year
Wendy D.	7/17/97	1 year
Tonia	6/1/96	2 years
Brian W.	6/2/90	8 years
Cinde B.	6/4/94	4 years
Jim G.	6/13/94	4 years
Amber B.	6/15/92	6 years
Barbara H.	6/16/92	6 years
Robin Z.	6/18/96	2 years
Al	6/20/94	4 years
Aleta	6/20/94	4 years
Cindy	6/20/94	4 years
Dean W.	6/29/92	6 years
"Terrorist" John	7/2/92	6 years
"Jackhammer" James	7/20/96	2 years
Ted J.	7/30/90	8 years



District 6

Alice K.	6/1/96	2 years
Allison O.	6/1/95	3 years
Mikki	6/15/91	7 years
Carol Mc. "Mom"	6/23/88	10 years
Chris W.	7/4/91	7 years
Sean P.	7/21/96	2 years
"Morning" John B.	7/23/96	2 years
Andrea P.	7/25/94	4 years

District 7

Melanie B.	5/17/95	3 years
Nick M.	5/16/96	2 years
Steve R.	5/31/96	2 years

District 8

Libby G.	6/6/90	8 years
Geoffrey G.	5/30/97	1 year

District 10

Jamie B.	6/1/97	1 year
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District 11

Craig S.	5/25/97	11 years
Rocco C.	5/29/95	3 years
Vivian K.	6/8/97	1 year
Thsia	7/7/97	1 year
Pat L.	7/23/95	3 years

Columbus, GA

Clara	6/3/96	2 years
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Putney, VA

Sheryl	5/16/97	1 year
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Cyberspace!!! (Spencer, MA)

Marc L.	7/3/97	1 year
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SERVICE IS A GIFT

By Susan B. District 11

We want to thank the twenty-nine MA members who took the time to write and submit their stories for consideration in the Second Edition of "Life With Hope."

At the Marijuana Anonymous World Service Conference in Orange County in May, fifteen stories were Conference-Approved and turned over to *A New Leaf* Publications. Work will begin soon on the Second Edition

As the Literature Trustee for MAWS, I had the privilege of reading all the submitted stories. A wonderful, hard-working literature committee formed in Portland to read, select and edit the stories. Our goal was to select stories that carried the message, and were from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. We all felt very grateful to be able to do this work.

I have been privileged to be of service in MA at every level. I get to BELONG in this fellowship that gave me my life back. There is nowhere I feel more connected and filled with love than in an MA meeting. Therefore, it is important to me that MA continues to thrive and grow, and reach the addicts who are still suffering, especially those who do not yet know about MA. For that, I am responsible.

Every person who does service, on any level, carries the message. You ARE wanted and needed. Each individual makes a difference. Let yourself experience the gifts of service. You will be amazed!

New Meetings!!!

SOUTH DAKOTA

Sun-Sioux Falls-5:30pm

O,NS,WA

Sioux Valley Behavioral Health Services @2812 S.Louise (across from Sam's Club)
"Weed Be Gone"

TEXAS

Fri-Austin-7:00pm O

"Leaf Us Alone Group"

Faith Presbyterian Church (Senior Room) @1314 Oltorf St. (1 blk W. of I-35)

INTERNATIONAL

NEW ZEALAND

Sat-Christchurch-12:00noon

Trust Bank Community House @187 Cashel Street

Wed-Christchurch-7:30pm
Community Law Centre @281 Madras Street

ENGLAND

Thu-Surrey Guildford-7:30pm

Vaughn House @5-7 Chetsey Street

CANADA

Sun-B.C. Courtenay-1:00 pm

543 6th Street (on Vancouver Island, in the Comox Valley)
"Sunday Step Study"

MA Worldwide...

San Francisco (District 1) P.O. Box 460024 San Francisco, CA 94146 (415) 522-7373	L.A. County, North (District 6) P.O. Box 2433 Van Nuys, CA 91404 (818) 759-9194	Portland, Oregon (District 11) P.O. Box 14125 Portland, OR 97293 (503) 221-7007
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South Bay (District 3) P.O. Box 111341 Campbell, CA 95011 (408) 450-0796	New York (District 8) (212) 459-4423	Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter P.O. Box 194 Sadsbury, PA 19369 (610) 622-9243
Seattle (District 4) P.O. Box 1509 539 Queen Anne Ave. N Seattle, WA 98109 (206) 548-9034	Santa Cruz (District 9) P.O. Box 3196 Santa Cruz, CA 95063 (408) 427-4088	New Zealand MA Service Centre P.O. Box 74-386 Newmarket Auckland 3, New Zealand (09) 846-6822
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World Service Office

P.O. Box 2912, Van Nuys, CA 91404 • (800) 766-6779

<http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org>

e-mail: info@marijuana-anonymous.org