



JULY 2004

Volume 14, Number 7

A NEW LEAF

A PUBLICATION OF MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS

CONGRATULATIONS to M.A. ONLINE for officially becoming DISTRICT 13!

I Found M.A. ONLINE

(excerpts from the story in *Life With Hope*, pgs. 139-146)

I am a recovering pothead. If it had not been for the MA program online I could not introduce myself as "recovering" because, you see, when I found MA online there were no MA meetings at all in the state where I live! I was recently talking to my online sponsor and she suggested that I share my experience, strength, and hope of how I got clean online. I made a commitment that I was willing to do whatever it takes to get clean and stay clean...and part of that is following what is suggested to me by my sponsor...so here goes:

I didn't try pot until I was 26 years old because I was scared of it, scared because it was an illegal drug, but mostly because I might enjoy it. This fear enabled me to just say no many times before I finally said yes.

The first time I tried it was on my wedding night. I won't go into details here except to say that my worst fear reigned true. Anyway, my disease was unleashed that night. I wanted to smoke it as often as possible and did. I thought I was just having fun because after all, pot is not addictive, right? Wrong.

Then, only seven and a half months after I got married, my husband committed suicide and my world was yanked out from under me! I had lost my best friend and my soul mate. When I took the marriage vows and said till death do us part, I had no idea that would be so soon. I didn't want to have to deal with the grief or the issues around a suicide that do not come with other kinds of death. I am NOT saying that grieving a suicide is worse than grieving other deaths. I am just saying there are some unique issues to being a survivor of suicide. I did not want to look at these. I dove headfirst into all the pot I could get my hands on and used it to numb these emotions.

My obsession with pot grew deeper and deeper. I was not only smoking it daily, but I was also progressing to smoking it at times when I never thought I would allow myself to be under its influence. I'd smoke in the car on the way to an appointment, or just before going to a business meeting (I run my own business out of my home so this made it easy). I'd smoke just before going to another twelve-step meeting. I'd basically smoke just before going anywhere that I could not openly roll one up and smoke it. I spent most of my time with my using friends, who became my closest network. When times were dry and the pot was difficult to get I would crush the seeds and chop up the stems and load up my pipe. I hid the film containers with my "emergency stash" pre-cleaned and ready to roll. I had an eel skin lipstick case that was my joint case. I would roll several up at night and fill the lipstick case up with joints so I didn't have to waste time in preparation when I wanted one. I wanted it when I wanted it. I worked out a great arrangement with one of my

customers who was also one of my user buddies. When she needed my product, we traded it for pot. I thought that was a great arrangement.

Then something happened. I began isolating myself in my house only venturing out when I absolutely had to. I quit answering my phone (which is the lifeline of my business) and my addiction went to an even higher level. I woke up and lit up a joint with my morning coffee or soda. I smoked throughout the day. I was stoned more hours than not. What a great life, I thought. I don't have to worry about anything or feel anything. Then the pot quit working. My best friend, marijuana, let me down. No matter how much I smoked, I could not seem to get that high I wanted anymore. I couldn't seem to numb the feelings anymore. What would this pothead do next?

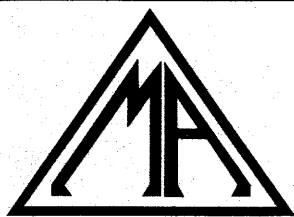
I began drinking heavily with pot. Somewhere in all of this insanity, I had a moment (and I DO mean Moment) of clarity. I got scared. I could see that I was headed down the same path of alcoholism that my father had been on. I didn't want that. I had said it would not happen to me.

I was miserable. I wanted the insanity to stop, but was at a loss as to how. I could not imagine life without marijuana. How in the world could I quit? It was all I thought about anymore, using it, scoring it, and keeping it hidden. I felt so alone. I went online on my computer and found Marijuana Anonymous. Could it be that there really is such a program? Was I dreaming? I had jokingly said to my using buddies that I needed a twelve-step program for my pot use. Be careful what you joke about, huh?

My journey into recovery began when I found MA's website. Little did I know at the time what a precious and priceless gift this would be. Initially, I thought, "Okay, this is great, all I have to do is get the MA meeting schedule in my town and I am on my way." There was only one small problem—there was no MA in my town, or in the whole state for that matter. Once again I felt lost in the abyss of my disease. But alas, I e-mailed MA and asked for help. Guess what? A reply from a wonderful woman came back to me. She said she would be my online sponsor if I were willing to do whatever it took to get clean. She was honest, yet warm, and said it wouldn't be easy, but it was a simple program. She snail-mailed me lots of literature from MA and prepared me for detox.

Boy, that was hell! I don't ever want to go back there again. I probably wore her out those first few months. I was craving pot like I can't even put into words.

I was in daily, sometimes hourly contact with my online sponsor. She reminded me to just stay in today, stay in this minute, don't use for this hour. She helped me through the



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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We send approximately 681 copies of
A New Leaf each month to subscribers in
31 states

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detox with her loving, supporting, yet tough-loved hand. I was irritable (nice way of saying insane), could not sleep, had the sweats all the time, had the shakes, and had unbelievable cravings. My thoughts were still obsessed with pot. I wanted it, yet I wanted to be free from its bondage. My sponsor sent me writing assignments on one Step at a time. I willingly (though sometimes it felt like taking a really raunchy tasting medicine that I knew was necessary to take to get well) completed the assignments.

She called me one night all the way from the opposite end of the country. I was overwhelmed with emotion that she would actually take the time and the expense of a long-distance call for this pothead. Her support poured out unceasingly. She helped me through the vivid dreams and nightmares of using. She explained each symptom of detox and said that it would not last. I had to trust she was right; after all, she was clean. I'm happy to report that she WAS right, as she usually is, and the symptoms did subside.

But the obsessive thought continued. She told me that those too would go away. Not forever, but I would get some relief and they would only come back long enough to remind me that I have disease and that it was waiting for me to fail at recovery and come back to me. What a scary thought. Again, she was right. There came a day when I actually did not think about smoking a joint. What a gift! That was my first glimpse of peace and serenity.

Meanwhile, during all of this contact with my online sponsor, I went to the online meeting. Now, let me remind you that I live on the East Coast, so it was midnight my time when the meeting started and 1:30-2:00 a.m. when it ended. This pothead was willing to do whatever it took to get the support a meeting would offer. I learned to take a nap on Sunday afternoons so I could stay up for the meeting. I "listened" to the shares at the meeting. I felt like I had truly found my home with these people. I could relate to them. They know me even though most of them lived on the other side of the country from me.

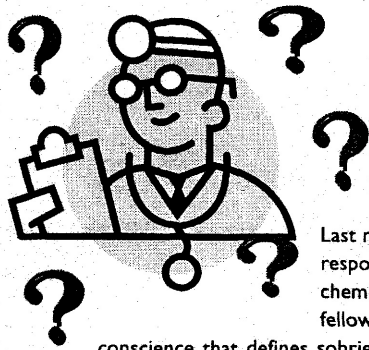
Then one Sunday night when my sponsor was the leader she called on me to share....YIKES!!! I did, and the feelings poured out of me that I had run from for so many years. The group embraced me. They shared some tools with me to help me begin to heal from my grief. It didn't matter to them that it had been nine years since my husband died. The point was, I had never dealt with it. I was in therapy too during all of this and still am.

I used the tools shared with me, talked at the meetings, talked to my sponsor, read my MA literature, literature for recovering alcoholics, took my grief to therapy, and began trudging through all of the feelings. First I dealt with what I call Politically Correct feelings of grief...sadness, loneliness, abandonment, intense sorrow of what was lost and what could have been, etc. Then it came time for the BIGGY, the Politically Incorrect, as I saw it, feeling of anger and resentment. Again the online program of MA was there to embrace me. My sponsor helped me talk about it and understand that it was a large part of the healing I had to go through.

Guess what? I made it! I survived ALL of the emotions, Politically Correct/Incorrect alike, and have found a new peace and a new happiness. I do not regret the past. I do not regret knowing, loving, marrying, and sharing my soul with my husband. Now I can remember him as a gift, though brief, and the wonderful times we did share together. Someone in this wonderful online MA program suggested that he taught me the depths of how much I could give and receive love, and that I would have that again in my life. What a gift. Yes, I wish that I could have had it with my husband and we could have grown old together. But that didn't happen. I can't change that. I can change how his death affects my life. I can learn how to move on with my life, and I can be clean and sober and happy, joyous and free.

If it had not been for MA online, I would never have learned all of these things. I know I have so much more yet to learn. This journey of recovery has been one filled with miracles and gifts of the heart. I now know peace and serenity. Now there is the first MA meeting in my state, in my town, thanks to my sponsor's suggestion of my starting one up. Now I have the opportunity to share this message of recovery. For that I am grateful and thank my HP each day for online MA.

TO VISIT THE ONLINE COMMUNITY GO TO WWW.MA-ONLINE.ORG



Dr. Know, M.D. (The Marijuana Doctor)

Hello fellow M.A. members. What a long day! I just got back from surgery. I had to remove a black, crusty pipe screen from an addict's trachea. He inhaled so hard; he sucked the screen through the pipe clear into his throat. He's doing fine now. He admitted he was powerless over marijuana and that a power greater than himself can restore him to sanity. Please pray for him and all the addicts who still suffer.

Last month I inquired about sobriety in M.A., the occasional drink, and requirements for taking chips. Not too many responded to the question. One addict in District 7 said, "By not telling all newcomers to quit all mind altering chemicals including alcohol, we are not being rigorously honest, which is a foundation of Marijuana Anonymous." A fellow addict in Philly said, "In Philly we just say sobriety, and we let anyone take a chip. However we have a group

conscience that defines sobriety as abstinence from all mind altering chemicals including alcohol, and we say it to those who ask. From a personal standpoint I will only take a chip and mark milestones if I have continuous sobriety from all substances, which I do for almost 2 years.

One addict simply said, "Meetings are autonomous." Another addict said, "The definition of sobriety should be left up to the individual." I'm not sure it is healthy to have such inconsistency in our program, but as long as we embrace all members and newcomers with love and understanding, and teach the tools we have been taught, I give our program a clean bill of health and to continue the good work.

Being a doctor, I am always skeptical of alternative methods of medicine. But being a member of Marijuana Anonymous, I have seen the miracles first hand. Please share with me a specific instance where you thought your higher power intervened and made a difference in your life.

Conference Attendees Speak Their Mind

We asked a few questions at the Conference this year. Most of the respondees were in their first few years of Conference going. Here's a brief sampling of what people had to say....

When we asked about what they were expecting, so many replied that they expected "legalism and contention", "a big long bitch session", or even "fighting over small, petty stuff." But – SURPRISE – it didn't turn out that way. While there is always conflict and disagreement, "The Conference and Committee Leadership was masterful," said one attendee. Others called it things like "fun" and "productive." "There was much spirit of unity and camaraderie, and at the start of the last day an inescapable grin overtook my face and serenity settled my soul," said another.

What issues were people looking forward to addressing? Petition for Online District Status, Making Life With Hope Available in PDF Format Online, The Amended Appendices, the ever popular, Length of Sobriety Chip Requirements debate, and non-Conference literature approval. Overall, it seems most people were satisfied with the outcome of the votes.

When asked if this experience would help their recovery and the recovery of the District that sent them, there was an almost unanimous feeling. "I have a lot of great ideas to bring back," said one. "Absolutely," enthused another, "Serving has been one of the best things I have had the opportunity to do as a sober person. It forced me to grow through my discomfort with disagreement and experience the long-term sobriety in MA that I only get here.

There was plenty of advice for future Conference attendees. Preparation seems to be important. "Discuss as much as you can (beforehand) with your District on all agenda items." "Have delegates' committee assignments sent to the delegates thirty days in advance." Others cautioned against going with a set of expectations, "...use the Third Step to trust the process." Have patience. "Work your program before you come, and while you're there to help you have more patience and tolerance. Also be ready to practice patience and tolerance and be open minded to hear issues that may change your vote." Above all remember why you're there. "Fear not, you will be there among friends and fellow addicts, and you are all there for the same purpose: the betterment of MAWS (Marijuana Anonymous World Service) and it's ability to effectively carry out it's prime directive, Step Five." "Keep an open mind, but remember to represent the collective opinion of your district."

The Convention isn't all business. We all need to get together and let our hair down a little. What would you expect from Orange County for entertainment? BEACH PARTY!!!! There was much love for the Beach Party. "I enjoyed the Beach Party very much." "I enjoyed the Beach Party...visiting with old friends and making new ones."

All in all, people were glad they came. "Thanks for all your hard work," said one. Another person commented that "It is a privilege and an honor to join with the Conference delegates." And finally, "I came to this conference sure I'd never do it again, but now I can't wait to do it again. It was very enlightening and reassuring to see how strongly supported MA is by such competent and devoted people. I can't recommend it strongly enough to anyone considering serving in any way at a conference."

One thing could be improved on, we found out. "More water." Said one, "This is a long time to go without enough water." Okay, we'll fix that next time!

MA WORLDWIDE

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

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510.287.8873

South Bay (District 3)

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408.450.0796

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Orange County (District 5) (Includes San Diego)

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619.685.2808

LA County No. (District 6)

PO Box 2433, Van Nuys, CA 91404
818.759.9194

LA County So. (District 7)

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New York (District 8)

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Santa Cruz (District 9)

PO Box 3003, Santa Cruz, CA 95063
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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 2

Anonymous	7/14/89	15 years
Tom S.	7/01/02	2 years

District 3

Ken S.	7/03/88	16 years
Mary S.	7/01/90	14 years
Steve S.	7/04/97	7 years
Jeff B.	7/23/98	6 years

District 6

Kevin B.	4/22/02	2 years
Evan S.	3/17/03	1 year
Walter T.	4/12/03	1 year
Lisa M.	5/12/03	1 year
Jeff M.	6/17/03	1 year

Philly Group

Steve K.	7/14/00	4 years
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District 7

Mark H	4/28/93	11 years
Nick	5/16/96	8 years
Farmer Doug	6/11/99	5 years
Josh G	5/3/00	4 years
Andy	4/22/01	3 years
Bob	4/4/02	2 years
Ruel	5/02/02	2 years
Vanessa L	5/18/03	1 year
Erin	4/17/03	1 year
Eli	4/25/03	1 year

District 10

Mark G.	6/24/03	1 Year
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District 12

Jennifer L.	7/01/03	1 year
Meg L.	7/09/87	17 years

District 13

Rich C.	7/23/02	2 years
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Celebrating 129 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!