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# A NEW LEAF

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## Loneliness and Finding Fellowship

by Angel S., Hawaii

I grew up an only child. The first emotion I remember feeling is loneliness. This continued through my childhood years in school, at home and in the neighborhood. I was always alone. Even when I was around others, I never felt I fit in. When I became a young teenager, I found a friend. Her name was Mary Jane. For the first time I felt I fit in, as long as I had her with me. My whole life, overnight, centered around her. I changed my clothes, my music, my new "friends", who had more Mary Jane than I did, and my attitude towards life.

If you weren't a friend of Mary Jane, you weren't a friend of mine. Overnight, I was popular. Everyone wanted to know me, be with me and/or party with me because of Mary Jane.

But those people came and went. The only thing that was constant, was my needing and longing for MJ. As with all relationships, over time, I had to start making choices. See Mary Jane is high maintenance, and I only had so much money and only so much time. So, I gave up paying my bills, buying food, going to school, going to work, being a functional member of society on and off for 19 years.

I gave up other relationships that took my time away from Mary Jane; my boyfriends, my girlfriends, my children, my husband, my family and myself. I was in a one-sided relationship with Mary Jane. I loved her at all costs, and all she did for me was allow me an avenue to make myself even lonelier than ever.

Mary Jane and I had a few break ups, where I would swear her off, but being alone only made me want her more. At the end of my 19-year run, she was the only friend I thought I had left. We had been through so much together. But I finally understood, it was beyond a dysfunctional relationship. I was an addict.

So I sought to find REAL friends who would understand this loneliness that was engulfing my whole being. I went to different 12-step groups and found some fellowship, but often had to qualify my addiction as a "real" addiction. Then, I found Marijuana Anonymous and others who had loved Mary Jane like I had. What our love for her had done to us, and the emptiness it left us with was something I didn't have to deal with alone. We had each other. We had recovery and we had hope. The saying "doing together what we could not do alone" was the fellowship in a nutshell.

Sometimes I still get lonely, and this is my trigger. But now, I have a means to the end, my brothers and sisters in MA. Whether online or at meetings, we share our experience, our strength and our hope for lives free of Mary Jane. I now have a life with hope for I now have a life in M.A.

## Circle of Love—Conference 2005

I want to write this while it's still fresh in my heart. The MAWS Conference 2005, held in Burbank California, was an awesome experience! I had the honor of being elected Portland Oregon's first Delegate back in 1997, being the Conference Coordinator for 1999, and returning as an elected Delegate this year. But the conference that sticks out in my mind is the 1996 Seattle, WA conference. I was four months sober and thought I was going to a convention (you know, the *fun* one). I got to watch how delegates and trustees worked together: they argued, they laughed, they somehow came to decisions by voting, and they openly displayed love and affection for each other.

This blew me away! I remember being squeezed into a little itty bitty tiny room with about 30 other people and we each had one minute to share on the topic of "fun in recovery." It was by far the most electric meeting I have ever attended. I finally felt at home and found my new addiction: **service work**.

What completed this conference changed my life...it was called the "Power Circle." I am not going to sit here and explain it all to you, instead I will share the experiences I have received from both sides of the circle. Being within that circle at four months sober left me blubbering with tears, snot and drool, and reaching for a friend's t-shirt to clean myself off. I felt a new energy of complete and utter love given to me by the others in that circle, thus creating a new addiction. I wanted to be at every single conference just so I could be part of that circle again. I even missed a flight home from the North Hollywood 1997 conference just because I couldn't leave before the circle was done.

Over the years I came to know the MA member who usually leads the circle, and due to circumstances he was unable to do this year's circle. I have to admit, I was disappointed. But I have one of those Higher Power/Guides that has a way of screaming in my ear when I'm not listening for the solutions. I received the message: "You can't keep it unless you give it away," loud and clear. I had some reservations; thinking I would be missing out if I led the circle this time, or, would my Guide really walk me through the spiritual process required to give fully to those within the circle? So I did what I have been taught in MA, offer myself and leave the rest to God.

God was shining very brightly on the last day of the conference...we finished deliberations four hours early. I'll bet that's a first! We now had ample time for the circle. I was a little nervous at first and found my voice wavering, (for those who know me, this is probably a shock). I believe my Guide was keeping me humble for the journey about to happen.

The circle formed and the process began. As the love was unfolding among fellow members, I found myself in awe watching from within the circle. People opened their hearts, they gave and received love in all God's glory. I felt all that love reverberating through me, just by being present! No better gift have I ever received! Afterwards I watched people who had argued in committees hug each other. I saw the stored tensions prior to the circle were now gone. A lighter step was afoot among each who attended the circle, **including myself**. "The Great Spirit speaks to us in supernatural ways, *"a da to li s to di."*

by Trisa, District 11



## 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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## Meetings as a Higher Power

By Anonymous

At one of my first MA meetings, I heard the reading of the "Higher Power" glossy covered handout. I was amazed at the mere mention of the possible uses of non-theistic higher power concepts as a 12-step methodology. Perhaps as potheads, there exists a natural tendency towards alternative, progressive or liberal interpretations of what have now become traditional entrenched ideas of the 12-step community.

It's no secret that the 12-step program was founded by Christian monotheists. Oddly, this particular breed of Christianity gave more to the 12-step community than most of us consciously realize. The Oxford Group, to which Bill W. and Dr. Bob belonged, claimed a focus on what they called, "first century Christianity." This version of Christianity differs from the popular (U.S.) sects in its explanations on the Christian community being a self-supporting, member helping community. Or as a friend of mine once put it: "It was a time when Christianity and socialism were used together in the same sentence." Clearly, the 12-step community owes a great debt to the Oxford Group ideology. I find it interesting that it was not, at the time, a mainstream religious idea.

For me, and countless newcomers that I hear in meetings, there was a constant struggle to reconcile myself to religious conceptions to which I had so adamantly taken exception. The 12-step idea of "a God of your own understanding" was a relieving boon. I was able to come to terms with my struggle of using God as a higher power and felt the Meeting was a suitable substitute. It worked for me.

## Common Bird

by Su S (District 11)

As I walked this morning  
I looked up and saw a pretty white bird.  
It looked so peaceful gliding on the breeze.  
It flapped its wings, and I realized  
by the lack of grace  
it was a common seagull,  
garbage can of the sky,  
willing to take whatever scraps someone will  
throw its way  
or settle for what it can find.

I feel a kinship with this creature.  
I have been like this for many years myself,  
beautiful in my own way  
yet raucous in voice, settling for scraps and  
garbage  
thrown carelessly my way,  
put here by the creator,  
fulfilling my own role and destiny  
even though I may not have  
the flight or dignity of the eagle  
or stand as tall as the crane.

I may not have the beautiful voice of the  
meadowlark,  
but, in recovery, I have learned  
genuine appreciation of my own gifts  
and an understanding the creator values me.  
I realized I had looked up  
and loved this common bird  
for the first time.



# The Roving Reporter

*For this month the Roving Reporter asked, "What surprised you most when you got sober?" Here is what a few had to say:*

What surprised me the most was that everything didn't get all wonderful once I put down the substances. I still had to work on me, and that is where the steps come in. The best thing about recovery is that I can get through stuff today, no matter what, good or bad I get through it, and I don't have to drink or drug. *Rich C. District 13 & Philadelphia.*

The tremendous growth I'm going through by continuing to be willing to do what it takes to get recovery. *Suzy*

There were actually many things that surprised me when I got sober. First was the fact that I almost immediately\* started to remember all of my dreams, which is something I hadn't been able to do for 20 years. The second thing was that I was able to remember the names of the people I was meeting in my newly found sobriety. Also, my cravings for sugar subsided, (they have since returned;-) and I started to drink a lot more water. The last thing that REALLY surprised me, is the fact that I was actually able to \*not\* pick up a bong after 22 years of smoking pot every day. I didn't really think MA could help me stop (i.e. I was hoping they could at least teach me to "smoke in moderation"- (heh-heh;-), but it did work, and is still working for me today, one day at a time! *John M, District 1*

I didn't realize I had a memory problem until I got clean and saw all the things I had forgotten. My boyfriend would tell me, "Remember, I told you about..." and I would always deny it. "No you didn't", I'd say. But it was true. I had no recollection of what many people said. Even if I wasn't high at the time when they told me, my memory was a mess! Of course, I thought it was a sign of aging rather than 30 years of smoking! It is slowly coming back to me now. Thank Goddess! *Tina D., District 1*

The most surprising thing for me when I got sober was the fact that the shame lifted immediately, all by itself. Once I sat at Step One, I was completely relieved of all shame around being a pothead. In my professional life, it was perfectly okay to be an alcoholic or a cocaine addict, but if you smoked pot, you were an outcast. This, coupled with years of having to hide the fact that I smoked at all, created a shame in me that I was unaware of until it suddenly went away. It was a real gift. *Sarah M. District 12*

That I felt physically better in a matter of weeks, and that life became more fun, not less! *Liam K., Davis, CA*

That I didn't miss smoking pot was the biggest surprise; that I could be so happy without it was the best surprise. *Thadens, Seattle*

That my problems didn't go away. *Jennifer L., Philly*

How many others were getting sober in society. *Anonymous*

That pot wasn't the only issue that needed addressing; new way of living had to follow. *Anonymous*

My serenity; my feelings coming back. *Anonymous*

That I could enjoy the movies not stoned. *Anonymous*

Probably that the desire to smoke marijuana went away so quickly and that I had so many interests I never knew I had before. *Anonymous*

That I could have as much fun as I have in sobriety. I thought I would be bored and boring, but it's been exactly the opposite. *Todd E., District 6*

That I even could do it first of all, then that I actually felt better until I felt worse, but then I felt better. *Sheila B., Philadelphia*

The ability to follow through on projects. The amount of friends who like me for who I am instead of what I could supply them with. *Doug F., District 7*

How much I really didn't know about myself, and how many emotions I was stuffing. *Lee, District 2*

I could dance my butt off and have a better time than I ever did altered. *Drea B., District 11*

The chills up and down my spine when I started to feel things! *Rick V., District 11*

How all my stuff magically returns from the pawn shop! *Eric G., District 11*

That I found a rag in my car that was covered with green bits, and I shook it into the wind and threw it away. *Carlin, District 11*

My allergies got better. *Anonymous*

That music still sounded good, the woods still smelled wonderful, and I could still get crazy. *Paul G., District 11*

"What surprised me most was the acceptance I felt at each meeting, even though I had slipped three times before I finally got sober. There was no judgment, no accusation, just open arms and a pat on the back for coming back." *Kathy B., District 5*

**For AUGUST, the ROVING REPORTER asks, "What do you like best about your sponsor?"**

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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

Tom S.	7/01/02	3 years
David L.	7/21/04	1 year!
Kevin V.	7/23/85	20 years
Suki G.	5/26/95	10 years
Raquel S.	5/26/99	6 years
Kathy L.	6/14/95	10 years

### District 7

Delta G.	5/15/03	2 years
Johnny N.	5/10/03	2 years
Michael	5/01/88	17 years
Alban B.	5/01/97	8 years
Josh G.	5/03/00	5 years
Nick M.	5/16/96	9 years
Leon	5/18/04	1 year!
Gary	6/23/92	13 years

### FRESNO, CA

Benny M.	5/19/03	2 years
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### District 3

Mary s.	7/01/90	15 years
Davy G.	7/04/97	8 years
Jeff B.	7/23/98	7 years
Steve S.	7/07/97	8 years

### AUSTIN, TX

Val T.	7/23/93	12 years
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### District 10

Charlotte M.	5/06/89	16 years
Dan K.	5/12/04	1 year!
Devon G.	6/16/04	1 year!
Ron M.	6/30/04	1 year!
George	7/07/94	11 years
Stan R.	7/30/90	15 years

### Philadelphia, PA

Larry H.	5/01/04	1 year!
Gina A.	6/04/04	1 year!
Steve K.	7/15/00	5 years
Rich C.	7/23/02	3 years

### District News:

**Seattle/Portland Campout.** District 4 and District 11 will co-host a campout Friday, July 16th through Sunday, July 17th, at the North Fork Campground (south of Randle, Washington and northeast of Mt. St. Helens), in Gifford-Pinchot National Forest. Workshops, hiking, meetings and lots of fun are planned.

**Contact:** Matt (206-848-5458) or Tad (206-228-2773) in District 4, or Drea (503-348-5304) or Sue (503-788-5864) in District 11, for details and directions.

### District 12

Don W.	6/13/04	1 year!
Robaire R.	6/16/04	1 year!
Jody S.	6/29/01	4 years
Joe S.	5/21/02	3 years
Meg. L.	7/09/87	18 years
Lindsay	7/20/04	1 year!
Danielle K.	7/20/04	1 year!
Ken R.	7/21/00	4 years
Scott B.	7/21/04	1 year!
Laurie W.	7/23/03	2 years
Paul C.	7/24/04	1 year!
Karen K.	7/25/02	3 years

### District 4

Erik K.	7/01/95	10 years
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**Celebrating 264 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!**