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A NEW LEAF

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I THOUGHT I WOULD NEVER FIT IN

by Bea

He (isn't it always a he?) is a teen or young adult whose wardrobe consists mainly of tie-dyes. His favorite pastime (other than bong toking) is playing guitar in a garage band, and his vocabulary is limited mainly to the words "dude" and "awesome"?

At least, that's what Hollywood seems to think.

But as most of you know, few M.A. members fit the media stereotype of a stoner. Many of us, in fact, lead double lives: functional addicts and professionals who manage to keep it together well enough to blend with our yuppie neighbors. After all, few people come to their first M.A. meeting after waking up in a gutter with a joint stuck in their arm.

Just what type of person is an M.A. member, anyhow? After an M.A. meeting a couple of years ago, I was approached by a "One Hit Wonder", one of those people you see at one meeting and then never again, who seemed confident he knew the answer to that question.

"You know, I came here to please my wife," he said to me, "But I don't belong here. I'm not like the rest of you people."

From the remainder of our brief conversation, I surmised that he believed his being a marijuana addict/Ph.D. made him superior to the other addict/students and addict/professionals in the room. (Ironically, this particular meeting included some of the most intelligent, educated, multi-degreed M.A. members I've met. But I digress.) He assured me he could kick his problem without the help of "you people," and since he has failed to keep coming back I can only hope he's succeeded.

Before my first trip into M.A., I was nearly as judgmental as this man. I, too, was a professional and a college graduate who, despite the obvious fact that I didn't fit the media's stoner stereotype, somehow expected an M.A. meeting to be filled with nothing but stereotypes. I thought I would never fit in.

I have since come to believe that part of M.A.'s beauty is its diversity. We come together seemingly randomly each week: students, teachers, blue collars, white collars, and yes, even the occasional tie-dyed no-collar. We come in all ages, races, religious and ethnic backgrounds, some of us left-winged, some from the right, and some with ambidextrous wings.

Regardless of what we look like or what stereotype

we appear to fit, we all have one thing in common: a desire to stop using marijuana.

I remember before I joined M.A. I felt so isolated, like I was the only person on this lonely planet struggling to shake a marijuana addiction. It's an understatement to say I felt comforted in learning I was not alone. Even when I met my nearly exact opposite at an M.A. meeting, all that mattered was our common addiction and the recovery support we shared.

In M.A., we are forever being reminded to place principles before personalities. This means in part, to me, that when I attend a meeting I need to leave my judgments and stereotypes at home. (Well, me and my judgmental character defect try to, anyhow.) I am a unique individual, but I am also like the rest of you people: I belong in M.A.

Note to the Fellowship

Starting with this issue of A New Leaf, we are making a few changes in the newsletter. For one thing, you will notice that there is a poem in this issue. But it's about more than poetry. Anything can be improved (progress not perfection, right?) and we want more people to get involved with A New Leaf, as readers and as writers. So we're putting in some ways for people to carry the message of recovery without having to write their whole story.

First, we're bringing back Roving Reporter, a favorite from days gone by. Roving Reporter poses a question to the fellowship each month and prints some of the responses the following month. This month's question is "What is the most important thing your sponsor told you early in your recovery?" To respond to Roving Reporter, either send your answer to us directly (see contact information on page 2) or get in touch with your district's Bureau Chief. When there are MA events, like a convention or a conference, we'll even designate somebody to be a Roving Reporter.

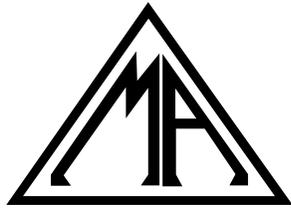
We're also going to open a discussion of a Step and a Tradition each month, with the number corresponding to the month. So for September's issue we are soliciting discussion of Step Nine and Tradition Nine. Again, send your thoughts on these topics to us directly or to your Bureau Chief.

Finally, we're going to dig through recovery literature each month and offer a "thought of the month" for you to reflect, and possibly share, upon.

If you have any other ideas for us, we'd love to hear from you.

With love and thanks,

The folks at A New Leaf Publications



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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The Most Beautiful Feeling

By Leonard B.

I always get nostalgic around this time of year.

It's been 8 years since I drove to the rehab from San Anselmo, California. Being a world-class people pleaser and not wanting to be late, I didn't have time for the endless number of cocktails I had planned to have before I checked in. Because I got lost. Very lost. Imagine driving around sweating between Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage, very stoned on Big Sur sensemillia. I was very talkative, however, on my cell phone, saying goodbye, in tears, to anyone that was home at the time, while in the middle of an extremely self-conscious burgeoning nervous breakdown. I called the center and they guided me in, "brought me in," out of the proverbial cold, so to speak. Dinah Shore Drive, Frank Sinatra Boulevard, Bob Hope Avenue. I started to hallucinate. Suddenly I was 9 years old, with my mother watching "The Hit Parade". (It was very good pot.)

I had insisted on telling my friends that I was going to be "checking in" to the Betty Ford Center, as if it was a hotel. "Checking in", not, "being admitted." But admit it I did, eventually. And when presented with the "20 Questions of Am I an Addict?" and it asked if I had ever been hospitalized, or institutionalized, I said, "No", conveniently not noticing I WAS IN AN INSTITUTION!

The next month was amazing, forever memorable, and miraculous. On my second day, I walked outside, into the afternoon heat of 116 degrees, and all desire for drugs left me in an instant. Evaporated into history. I still wanted to drink, however. I was still not at all convinced that living 100% clean and sober was a good idea for me. God had a different idea. Towards the end of my 28 days, it was suggested that I stay an extra 6 days for my "female dependency issues." I told my counselor I couldn't stay longer because I had to be in Los Angeles to pick up my 14-year-old son at the airport. Actually, I had a date.

Three days after my release, on the way to a Labor Day wine tasting party in Sonoma County, I stopped at an MA meeting in San Rafael, CA.

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A Work in Progress

by Terri R.

The addict mind:
exploding with needs and wants, desires and thoughts
Will you ever be quenched, quiet?
Dragging my carcass behind as you lurch toward oblivion
never reaching it
the wreckage of my life in your wake.
Sobriety:
turning the desires over to hope and God, light and love
Will you ever be quenched, quiet?
Even as I pray for release you infect me with darkness
and I turn, tumbling
toward tragic new consequences.
Recovery: touching divinity within myself now
Will you ever be quenched, quiet?
Pulling you behind me as I stumble to the light
my old wounds oozing, flowing.
Will you ever be quenched, quiet?
Will I ever be free?

The Shock of Sobriety

By Ken

My marijuana addiction lasted 27 years. In June of 2000, after countless months of frustration and heated arguments with my then 14-year-old daughter, something happened that changed both of our lives.

Although close in some ways, we were growing apart from one another, and her behaviors told me something was wrong. One afternoon she decided to shock me and pulled a twenty-dollar bag of bud out from her bra. As you might imagine, I was dumbfounded. Add to this that I had recently taken several bong hits and was pretty stoned myself. Confusion, pain and the immediate realization that I was in trouble all occurred in an instant.

What was I supposed to do? Where do you go for help in this situation? The biggest stumbling block was my denial that anyone knew I was a stoner or that it was a problem. I had believed for all those years that I could function normally and that no one would notice, then without any warning my daughter shows me her little prize in hopes of bonding with me. What a way to instantly sober up and know without a doubt that I need help.

Fast forward a couple of months, and I have broken under the pressure, agreed with my shrink to start attending MA meetings and am now living in a motel separated from my wife of 21 years. The situation and dynamics that had spurred me on to smoke all the time were now slapping me in the face for it.

Self pity was quickly replaced with a sense of hope after entering the program and sincerely working the steps daily. I knew that living in my own privately defined world had become a serious hindrance, and that in order to heal, grow and succeed things had to change.

What I found in the program were common bonds of experience, people who were high on living and not on evil weed. I began working with a sponsor and within four months had convinced my daughter to come to a few meetings with me. I moved back into the house, continued working the program, seeing the therapist and balancing my life between family and work. My adult life had been centered around pot, work, friends and family, and what resulted was a mess. Changing this balance, starting a business and getting the help I needed was only half of the story.

During this time my daughter had gone from bad to worse, tried committing suicide, and been voluntarily admitted to an adolescent psychiatric ward. Finally, she asked us to send her away and we found a wonderful therapeutic boarding school. Her progress and mine have made a dramatic difference in our relationship and provided us with the strength and hope for a healthy future.

The program and its success for me have helped define who I was and showed me not only the path my higher power had for me, but that my higher power did exist. That alone was something I had never imagined nor believed in.

Now two years later (July 21st was my second birthday), I have clarity through sobriety, hard work, meditation, and a belief that a higher power can and will guide you through the tough times. I have been to the bottom of the gutter and back, and I know the experience has left me stronger, smarter and more resilient to life's challenges. This has only happened because of MA and working the program. As part of the message says, "Our program is not easy, but it is simple." I definitely took much of what I read in *Life With Hope* to heart and set goals that I could attain quickly (1 week sober, 1 month sober, etc.), and held onto the current chip as a reward and reminder that I had set and achieved the goal.

The program works. I am an example of someone who thought they would smoke until they died and have found out that living without it is far better than surviving with it.

Thought of the Month

"The entire foundation of our program depends on an honest admission of our powerlessness over addiction and the unmanageability of our lives."

- *Life With Hope*, page 3

The Most Beautiful Feeling

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And there the second miracle happened. The speaker told my story. He was an artist, total pothead and light drinker. He had my attention. Then he said that when a very famous and well-respected guru in India was asked if there was anything spiritual happening in America, the guru answered, "recovery from addictions and the 12 Steps."

This is what I had been looking for my whole life! To be happy, healthy and spiritual. What an epiphany.

In the past, during the previous 26 years, because I never knew what great disappointments or triumphs were going to greet me, or who I was going to meet when I left the house, I always had to have a full flask of Vodka or Tequila, 5 joints, Valiums, Percodans, 'ludes (when they still existed), a vile of cocaine and a supply of ecstasy and some "srooms." I never met a drink, a drug or a woman that I didn't love.

So you can believe, and if you're reading this you must believe, what an absolute joy it is to be free from alcohol and drugs. I did the recommended 90 meetings in 90 days, got commitments and a sponsor, worked the steps, prayed and meditated. What a wonder it is to have a program of recovery available all over the world. It is so wonderful to be able to leave work at noon for a half-hour meditation every weekday. Of course my boss understands, since I run a recovery-oriented travel service for our travel agency.

I still get so grateful when a business meeting or an airline flight is scheduled for 7 a.m., and my first thought is, "Oh no, I'll be too hungover," or "They'll smell pot on my breath from my 6 a.m. hit," and then I remember: I'm clean. I'm free. I'm responsible.

I'm with God, in time and on time. And this is the most beautiful feeling I've ever had.

MA WORLDWIDE

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

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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

Steve E.	8/14/87	15 Years
Ginny	8/21/88	14 Years
Chris K.	8/12/96	6 Years

District 3

Pam J.	7/5/97	5 Years
Ellis L.	8/9/96	6 Years
Julie F.	8/18/96	6 Years
Chuck F.	8/31/98	4 Years
Ron R.	8/2/00	2 Years

District 5

Chris G.	8/21/90	12 Years
Lisa T.	8/21/90	12 Years
Coleman G.	8/13/92	10 Years
"Psycho" Mike R.	8/11/94	8 Years

District 6

Dancin' Tom	8/25/89	13 Years
Fellowship Mary	8/3/94	8 Years
Sean P.	8/21/96	6 Years
Eric B.	8/5/00	2 Years
David D.	8/24/01	1 Year!

District 7

Beth	7/7/01	1 Year!
Ari K.	7/3/96	6 Years

District 8

Jay F.	8/5/00	2 Years
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District 10

George G.	7/7/94	8 Years
Robert	7/3/01	1 Year!

District 11

Rychen	6/28/94	8 Years
Steve M.	6/1/97	5 Years
Brandon	7/5/94	8 Years

District 12

Eric L.	7/10/01	1 Year!
Ken R.	7/21/00	2 Years

California

DD	8/20/01	1 Year!
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Texas

Jatrina	7/16/00	2 Years
Kim	8/8/99	3 Years

Celebrating 176 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!