



A NEW LEAF

A PUBLICATION OF MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS

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Alert! The 2002 Convention in Seattle is coming! A registration form will be included in the next issue. For more information, visit the Convention website at www.seattlema.org!

My friend Doug

Bil N.

Part one

One topic I've heard discussed recently is whether or not substance abuse counselors may start MA meetings. This brought back memories of a couple of friends from my first days of sobriety. Of course, the memories get dim with age; I shall do my best to be accurate. In 1987, a pair of addicts named Doug and Lloyd had been going through a treatment program in the Seattle area. Being good potheads, they soon started complaining that they couldn't identify with much of what they heard at the other 12 Step meetings; feeling that

they didn't fit in. They wanted to hear how to get (and stay) off of pot; not coke, heroin, or booze. But, their counselor (who's name I believe was Paul) wasn't going to let them off the hook too easily. He suggested they take action. That action became Marijuana Anonymous. Paul helped his two clients get a room in a church, and assisted them in setting up meetings patterned after those 'other 12 step' meetings. Although I met him once or twice, he did not regularly attend any MA meetings. His only involvement was

doing the initial prodding. I was not to meet any of these people for several months. By then the fledgling MA fellowship in Seattle had grown from two stoners with a coffeepot to three weekly meetings split between two churches. Any meeting was sure to have about a dozen core members in attendance, along with new faces and occasional visitors. But, that's more story than there's space for here.

Part two

On the evening of Saturday, May 27, I went to another 12 step meeting. Another meeting, an-

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What Is The Question?

Steve S.

Is not life a series of Questions? What's up? What's next? How are you? How am I? What do you want? What do I want? What do I need? What's my next step? You going to finish that? If I know one thing, it's this: that I don't know anything. I can't give you any answers; I can only ask you to ask yourself certain questions. The answers are inside us already, in the form of a higher power. We just have to ask the

right questions. Do I want to subject myself to this process, or do I want to continue the progress of my disease? I guess this would be the base question for us addicts, because it will determine all our decisions. Can I give myself over to the challenges of the steps and learn to listen to my higher way, or will I focus instead on my self, and bettering my lot in life. It's a sneaky little

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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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devil, this self thing. Confusing in that on human terms, it's totally natural. Everyone wants to "get ahead", to better himself or herself, to be the victor, not to get walked on by others. Yet it is this same self-instinct which, grown out of proportion, has driven us to feel inadequate, threatened, and depressed. Consider this astonishing statement I heard on the radio the other day: two-thirds of the world's population has never used a telephone! In my world I feel behind the curve because I don't have a cell phone. Would it be nice? Yes. Convenient? No doubt. But should I feel inadequate or depressed about it? If I'm focused on my self I will.

WHAT WAS THE QUESTION?

Can I ask you a question? How's the world treating you today? How are you treating the world today? Are you ready to listen? Who is your higher power? These are some of the questions I ask myself daily. And slowly, bit by bit, they begin to affect the way I think, the ways I react. I don't know anything, because in giving my self over to a higher power, I give up claim to all self generated knowledge, relying instead on my higher power's ability to give me what I need when I need it. If I go into a situation thinking that I know what needs to be done here, I'm ready to dictate. Is it black or is it white? On the other hand, if I start out with the question "God, what am I supposed to do now?"

then I'm ready to listen, to see that it might be gray.

THE QUEST FOR QUESTIONS

I used to question authority, not realizing that that put me in a position of *being* one myself. I knew that something was terribly wrong with the world, but instead of bringing the spirit of forgiveness, I either got all riled up talking about it, or I threw up my hands and said it's all pointless and absurd, so I might as well just get loaded. Now I've started questioning my self and my belief system. Who is my higher power?

Several people have told me that a good way to read the Big Book is to ask each sentence as if it were a question. It sounds really silly when I do it, but I'm open to suggestions, so I've tried it a few times. Being a know-it-all is one of my character defects. Letting go of certainty and conviction is a challenge. How many times have I been positive that something was true, only to find out later that I was wrong? Or "bent" the truth in order to appear right? (Or just plain out lied!)

I am very susceptible to delusions of grandeur. It's an occupational hazard of being an artist. So many times I sat around getting high, working on some project that would be really amazing somewhere down the road. I'd be famous,

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My Friend Doug

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other birthday. I had been up all night doing coke, smoking pot, and drinking beer. I came back feeling beaten; glad that nobody in the big fellowship hall knew me. None of this was new. What was new was that this time I didn't think about how I was "not as bad off as those sick people in the meeting." I listened for the similarities, listening to stories with the word "yet" in mind. I talked at a meeting for the first time. As luck would have it, a regular attendee of MA named Jean-Paul B. heard me. Divining that my main problem was weed, he approached me after the meeting and told me about the newly formed MA. I listened with interest, as he told me about marijuana addiction, the fellowship of MA, and the people there. What he said made a lot of things which had confused me start to make sense. Asking when and where these meetings were held, I felt all of my enthusiasm dissipate. All three meetings took place in churches. Jean-Paul asked me if he'd see me at the Monday night meeting; I responded that since I was taking night classes (true enough), the Friday meeting was

the only one I could make it to. Thanking him for his time, I left thinking that there was little chance of my going to any meeting which was held in a church. Luckily for me, that was not the case. But, that's another story.

Part three

After six days of "white knuckle sobriety," I decided to attend the Friday night MA meeting I'd heard about. Faced with living life on life's terms, and not using drugs, a pothead meeting sounded more attractive; its being in a church seemed less daunting. I didn't realize that the difficulty wasn't in entering a house of worship, or keeping my agnostic mouth shut while people talked about God. It was worse. That night I met a number of people who were close to me in my initial recovery, Carol, John H., and Peter D, Doug, and saw Jean-Paul, who'd told me about the meeting. I immediately felt very welcome there, and knew that I'd found my way home. Our fellowship was very tightly knit, far more so than any I've been in since. But, there was a little unspoken contention be-

tween Doug and myself. Each of us bristled when the other talked; and would point out any flaws in each others' theories. Sharing my experience became a contest for telling the best story. As I look back, I think each of us was just trying to be the "big dog" of the group. With precious little profound spiritual growth (at least on my part), being the sickest was the only way to be the "most." One day Doug walked up to me, asking me if I'd like to watch the big Mariners game (I think it was post-season) at his house. Sensing that he'd been put up to this, I had to admit to myself that it must have been difficult for him. I admired his force of will. So, I watched the game with him, Lloyd, and a couple of other folks. The power of humility on Doug's part enabled us to not only tolerate each others company, but actually become friends. Although we both left Seattle within a few months, and lost track of each other, I have fond memories of Doug O. I intend to invite him to watch a Mariners game at my house the next time I see him.

What Is The Question?

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and all my little doodles would become national treasures. My family would be taken care of in perpetuity, and my parents would relax about how sketchy my finances always seem to be. Unfortunately, things don't always turn out like you plan them, and then I'd feel frustrated, betrayed,

and guilty about spending all that time on yet another pipe dream. (We potheads really understand the meaning of that expression.) Today I'm trying not to get too far ahead of myself and to focus instead on the little steps that lie before me and do a good job on each of those. That way my

higher power has a chance to guide my life.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

My friend's husband died yesterday. I was visiting her when she got the call from the paramedics that he'd passed out at work and they couldn't revive

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What Is The Question?

concluded

him. Minutes earlier we were walking around her shop, and she was fretting about where to put displays and new merchandise. Suddenly, her whole life was a big question mark. What now? It made me look at my own life with fresh eyes. What do I value? Have I put my love into action today? Have I done something for somebody besides my self today? How can I help?

Lately I've been working on the second step in an effort to improve my conscious contact with my higher power. As I was trying to write out my current conception of God for myself, I ran into a lot of questions, some of which I wrote down. I read them out loud, to myself at first, then to my sponsor, and finally to a step study group I attend weekly. The experience has been quite enlightening each time. I'll pass them on to you now, in the hope that you may find them useful. I suggest that you try it out loud, as I think it's much more effective that way.

Who are you God? Can I see you? Feel you? Will you speak to me? Whisper in my ear? Will you tell me which one of these paths might be best? How do I learn to hear you better? Will I learn to know you better? Can you help me to clear away my self-centeredness? Will you show me how I can help?



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Celebrating 258 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!