



A NEW LEAF

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Taking the Fifth

by Ilene M., District 6

My sponsor is well-known around our fellowship for her telling of a Fifth Step joke. It goes something like this:

A man was terrified of doing his Fifth for he had done something which he thought truly abominable, something which no one, especially his sponsor, could forgive. The man had actually had sex with a chicken (horrors!). Finally, knowing that his recovery would not

progress until he completed this important step, the man screwed up his courage and admitted the embarrassing deed. The sponsor remained calm, but silent. After a moment, he asked his sponsee: "Did the chicken die?" Somewhat taken aback, the man mumbled "Uh, n-no..." The sponsor replied with a grin "Well, mine did!"

This little joke illustrates something of the miracle of the Fifth Step. No matter how reprehensible you find one of your past actions, no matter how ashamed you are of your behavior---when you speak of it before your Higher Power and another human being, you will most likely discover that it is not all that shocking or terrible. I cannot describe the feeling that washed over me when I shared what I thought was my most heinous behavior with my sponsor. She barely flinched. Contrary to what I had dreaded (such as her banishing me from her home with the caveat that I never speak to her again), she calmly asked a few questions and was ready to go on to the next thing.

I was stunned. Here was my most shameful secret, aired out without

provoking so much as a word of reproach or a judgmental gaze. It was an incredibly freeing experience. I came to realize that I

"...I began to understand that if she [my sponsor] could forgive me, my Higher Power certainly could as well. So why shouldn't I be able to forgive myself?"

was the one who was punishing myself, unforgiving of myself. That wasn't my sponsor's job, nor was it the point of the Fifth Step. More importantly, I began to understand that if she could forgive me, my Higher Power certainly could as well. So why shouldn't I be able to forgive myself?

In short, the Fifth Step works. I was skeptical that it would, as I unfortunately was about most of the Steps (before I took them, that is). After all, I'd been in therapy

for years. Wasn't that like confession? I had few real secrets. I thought I knew myself pretty darned well. But there is something ingenious about the Steps. They work despite all of our intellects' attempts to pick them apart, to belittle or second-guess them. Like so many things that are suggested to us in the program, the Steps are best taken before the mind is ready or willing. If I had

waited for my brain to give the a-ok, believe me, I'd still be on Step One! My heart was willing to take the Steps, though, because it wants more than anything to be sober. And my heart is much more an enemy of my disease than my mind is. I am so grateful to have found this program of action that works directly with my heart, my best ally in the fight against the disease of addiction. R

Building a House of Bricks

by Greg S., District 6

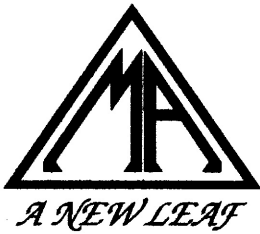
I recall a meeting at one or two weeks sobriety when my current-day sponsor. I was lonely and tired and resentful, but longed to have what I saw that this man had: a Oneness--a conscious contact with his Higher Power. Interested, I asked this man if he would sponsor me. He generously accepted me as his sponsee with the conditions that I understood my own powerlessness and unmanageability, and that I had to embrace my commitment to his direction with nothing less than total acceptance and willingness to work the steps. I agreed.

After a few weeks of the first, second, and

third steps, his next direction (notice, not a suggestion- a direction!) was that I had to turn around 180 degrees and start my fourth step. My will in God's hands, I turned around.

What I saw was an enormous pile of bricks that I had been dragging with me. No wonder I was so tired! He told me that this was the wreckage of my past, and that the only path to my recovery was to sort through this enormous pile of bricks. My first thought was run home and smoke a bowl, but he convinced me that by

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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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Building a House of Bricks

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this inventory thoroughly and honestly, those bricks would be used as the raw materials to build my own character. I was overwhelmed at first, but through his direction and a lot of work, my self-esteem and my own understanding of what I now know as my Higher Power grew.

First, I had to sort the bricks into piles of resentments, angers, fears, and sexual mis-conduct. I picked up each brick, each memory, one at a time, slowly feeling the weight and surface to remember what each brick represented and signified. The Serenity Prayer definitely helped me through the especially troubling memories. After the piles were sorted, I called my sponsor to check-in, and he said he'd come by for a visit.

When he came over, he brought a wheel-barrel, a trowel, bags of mortar, three windows, one door, and a single brick--which he called "Hope". He informed me that I was going to further examine each brick and see how it had come to be. I was then going to build my own character in the form of a house, and he would show me how to start. He mixed the mortar in the wheel-barrel, troweling and positioning the brick he had brought with him as the cornerstone for my structure and framework.

He explained that as I examined my four piles of bricks they would tend to line up into patterns. These patterns, he said, would become important in the Sixth and Seventh Steps. He also said that I would notice that some individual bricks would stand out more

predominantly than others. These would become important when I did the Eighth and Ninth Steps. He left me to finish the work on my own, instructing me to call him when I had finished. I labored and labored until I completed one wall of resentments, one wall of fears, one wall of angers, and one wall of sexual mis-conduct. I positioned the windows in three of the walls so I could see through them and so that sunlight could shine in. I installed the door in the wall of my sexual inventory.

I invited him over at completion, so he could see my work.... I was tending a fire in the hearth when he knocked at the door. I opened the door, and said, "Welcome".

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Thought for the Month

"I will recognize my shortcomings without passing judgement on myself. I will not make excuses or blame others, but recognize what needs to be changed in me."

(author unknown)

Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!

Cathy	Aug 22	3 yrs	Albert J.	Oct 8	7 yrs		
Jennifer S.	Sep 3	2 yrs	Andrea R.	Oct 9	2 yrs		
Ed K.	Sep 7	5 yrs	Susan B.	Oct 9	10yrs		
Leah F.	Sep 13	4 yrs	Rocco S.	Oct 10	4 yrs		
Randy F. (OC)	Sep 16	2 yrs	Rob M.	Oct 15	3 yrs	Sanford G.	Oct 25 8 yrs
Rob L.	Sep 28	8 yrs	Kim B.	Oct 15	1 yr!	Randy F. (LA)	Oct 25 9 yrs
John M.	Oct 2	2 yrs	Brian D.	Oct 16	9 yrs	Jason L.	Oct 28 3 yrs
Joanne M.	Oct 2	8 yrs	Ilene M.	Oct 20	2 yrs	Michael L.	Oct 29 6 yrs
Tomasso G.	Oct 2	5 yrs	Kathy B.	Oct 21	10yrs	Sue E.	Oct 30 7 yrs
C.T.	Oct 4	3 yrs	Bill J.	Oct 23	4 yrs	John C.	Oct 30 2 yrs



Building a House of Bricks

Continued from Page 2

He looked around my expansive quarters. He said he had seen many places much like mine, and he asked me how I felt. I told him I felt a sense of satisfaction.

I also told him I had a number of bricks left over. He said there always seems to be a few that just don't seem to fit into the four categories. "Those extra bricks will form your garden of Serenity."

We walked out the doorway into the "Sunlight of the Spirit". Together, we built a planter on both sides of the entrance to the house. As I was just about to place the final brick of my garden planter, my inner voice said quietly, "stop". I should not place

the final brick. This is not a program that can be over and done with, and that empty space represents the message I have to carry to the newcomer.

The greatest gift I can give to the newcomer is that retained brick. I now call that brick, "Hope". Every time I walk into my new house, that empty space reminds me that my service work can never be finished. I have come to believe that the "empty space" isn't really empty at all. That "empty space" is reserved for and will always be filled by that which I now understand and call God. *R*

Thank You, Ilene!

The editors of *A NEW LEAF* would like to bid a fond farewell (as well as congratulate...) former Editor, Ilene M. In the past year Ilene has been both managing and publishing editor. Well... she's been promoted!

Recently Ilene became our new World Services Office Manager. It's was a big job to begin with, and now, as a result of our new World Wide Web Site and all of the new correspondence we receive from all over the world... it's a HUGE job!

We would like to thank Ilene for all her time, effort and dedication to perfection while she was at the wheel of *A NEW LEAF*. *R*

Bulletin Board

ORANGE COUNTY! Oct. 12th, Saturday - members will caravan to Riley's Farm for a **Fall Celebration** of apples, pumpkins, hay rides, and a picnic, all with an 1800's theme. For info, call Meri K at (714)848-5241. Oct. 19th, Saturday - it's **Double Feature Horror Movie Night** starting at 9pm. For info, call Meri K at (714)848-5241. And on Saturday, Oct. 26th - a **Halloween Costume Party**. Contests, games, dancing, food. For info, call Aleta or Al at (714)890-0500.

LOS ANGELES, NORTH! Oct. 26th, Saturday- District 6 will be hosting a **Halloween Costume Party-Dance-Raffle**, in Canoga Park. For info, call Vicki M. at (818)718-8543. \$5. admission.

EAST BAY! Oct 26th, Saturday - District 2 will be hosting a **Halloween Party** at Mandana House in Oakland after the regular Saturday night meeting. for info, call Leah at (510)847-3021

WORLD SERVICES OPENING: The position of World Services Publications Coordinator will be opening up soon. Interested in being of service? Write to the World Services PO Box listed on this page.

OOPS! Last month we credited the article about New York's Sober Picnic in Central Park to our Bureau Chief, when in fact it was written by Diana C! *Thanks Diana!*

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Marijuana Anonymous World Wide Website
<http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org>



The Third Annual
Marijuana Anonymous Convention
 February 14-15-16, 1997
 San Diego, CA

- Tentative Agenda -

(specific starting times for registration, workshops and meetings to be announced)

Friday, February 14
 4 pm - Registration opens
 Dinner on your own
 Opening Meeting
 Speaker: Az A. (dist. 5)
 Late Nite Comedy

Saturday, February 15
 Breakfast
 Workshops & meetings
 Banquet dinner
 Keynote Speaker: Rocky (dist. 7)
 Dance

Sunday, February 16
 Breakfast
 Closing meeting
 Closing Speaker: Libby (dist. 8)
 Raffle

- Hotel Registration -

(Hotel is not included - you must book your room separately)

Handlery Hotel & Resort • 950 Hotel Circle North, San Diego (800) 676-6567
 Room Rates: \$69.00 per night plus tax - 1 to 4 people per room
 Reservations must be made by February 1st, 1997 to receive Convention rate
 You MUST say you are with MA Convention to receive this rate!
 You may stay Sunday night at the special Convention room rate if you wish

- Convention Registration Order Form -

Individual Events -

Individual Events -	Cost	# of Tickets	Total
Friday meeting & Late Nite Comedy only	\$10.00	_____	\$ _____
Saturday Breakfast Buffet & Workshops only	25.00	_____	\$ _____
Saturday Banquet Dinner only	25.00	_____	\$ _____
Saturday Dance only	10.00	_____	\$ _____
Sunday Breakfast Buffet & Meeting only	15.00	_____	\$ _____
Meetings & Workshops only (no food)	25.00	_____	\$ _____

(All events include unlimited coffee, iced tea & ice water - soda available in Hospitality Room)

Full Package Includes: -

(Before January 1st - save \$20.00) All events	\$65.00	_____	\$ _____
(After January 1st - save \$15.00) All events	\$70.00	_____	\$ _____

T-Shirt Orders -

Pre-Convention price (\$15.00 at the convention)	\$12.00 each	→	\$ _____
Size desired L (qty)_____ XL (qty)_____ XXL (qty)_____			

Send order form & check for total amount payable to:

MA Convention
 358 S. Main St., Suite 215, Orange, CA 92868

Total Registration Cost → \$ _____
 (Total all above items ordered)

Name(s) _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Your anonymity will be protected on all materials

Dinner Choice:

Chicken (qty)_____ Veg. Lasagna (qty)_____

Will you require babysitting during workshops? Yes

Ages of children _____ No