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A NEW LEAF

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Happy New Year !!!



A Return to Living

by Paul G in Portland, Oregon

I grew up as a child of privilege in a family that wasn't spiritual or religious – or good at communicating with one another. My sister was the good kid – good grades, good behavior, etc. – and my brother was the hellraiser. I was the quiet one, and I wound up, through no fault of my family, with the impression that I wasn't fun, interesting, or important.

When I was 12 I went off to a summer camp in Wyoming. That's where I got my first sense of beauty, wonder and magic. I fell in love with nature, travel, being on my own, and meeting people from other places. Plus, I got to start all over again and be a "cool" kid. I went to that camp three summers, and they remain among my happiest days.

Trouble is, I kept having to go back home—and I was going from age 12 to 15, during which time we all become neurotic, anyway. I was getting wound up. I wanted life to be fun, and I wanted to be accepted, but life at home wasn't getting it.

So I looked around for ways to enjoy myself. My brother was an alcoholic, but it sure looked like fun then! So I started drinking. I also got into the Grateful Dead, first because he was into it, but then because the music really touched me. And when I heard about this roaming tribe of fans, cruising around in their VW buses, getting high and living outside society, I decided *that* was something I wanted to do. My first Dead shows (also my first acid trips) were pure magic, and they confirmed my belief that the purpose of life was to travel, be outside, and party.

When I got to college, I found the potheads and cranked it up. Those years are a blur of drunks, smokeouts, laughing fits, munchies, craziness, roadtrips, and good times – and also wrecking the car my dad bought me, flunking out of school *twice*, gaining 50 pounds, and eventually getting busted and almost thrown out of school. I had fun, but I was starting to pile up wreckage.

The bust was the first time I vowed to quit pot. But then summer came, and my troubles seemed far behind me, so toking up every now and then didn't seem like a bad idea. Soon

enough, I was buying bags again. The pattern was set: I had decided that getting high was one of the keys to happiness. Over the years, I still had some good times, but I also got into legal trouble, depression, dangerous situations, neurosis, and very little personal growth, much less meaningful relationships. But I kept on smoking pot – for 15 years.

Slowly, though, I began to develop a sense that pot was getting in my way. Whole days would disappear into that bong. I started to like the feeling less and less. Sometimes, I would smoke up, feel the buzz, and then think, "Wait—I don't even like this!" But I kept doing it, and I kept feeling bad about it.

So I started trying to quit. I would flush it down the toilet, but by the end of the day I'd get more. I would throw away my pipes and then find myself smoking from a can. I would get angry at myself, then give up, say "to hell with it," and smoke anyway. I was, as our book says, "ensnared in the insidious grip of marijuana."

But ... I had a friend named John, a pothead like me, who wasn't smoking anymore. He said he'd been going to a "men's meeting." This conjured up images of guys banging drums in the woods, talking about their feelings and hugging each other. I wanted no part of such things. But I wanted to quit smoking pot, and somehow it had worked for John. I had just enough desperate fear that I thought I would go check this "meeting" out.

The first thing I noticed at the meeting was that these guys were familiar. These were potheads! I know (and love) the species well. And when they started talking, it was clear that they didn't smoke pot anymore – a couple of them for years! This was astounding, but it didn't seem relevant to my situation. Years? I was probably going to smoke when I got home that night!

Still, I felt good that I had gone. I had tried something other than flushing my stash. I hadn't shared, but just being there was a step in a new direction. So the next week I went back, and this time I actually said the words "marijuana addict." I also said I was scared—to a room full of men! And it felt good. I was being

honest. I was talking about my pot problem and people understood.

So I decided I would go to that meeting every week. And just to be sure, I took a service position. I knew that if I told the group I'd show up, I would. I didn't know the word then, but I was codependent—a perfect example of how a character defect, in the hands of a Power greater than me, can be an asset.

The more I worked at it, the more that Power took care of me. I got tired of my using crowd and replaced them with sober friends from the program. I started noticing wonderful little events, like I'd struggle with something, and then that would be the topic at the next meeting. When I talked about my problems, they got smaller, because I had gotten them out of my head, and other people had been through the same thing and had some experience to share. Sometimes I'd share about some crazy thing that had made me nuts, and people would laugh! Not laugh at me, but laugh because they'd been through that, too. (Anybody else ever smoked *whatever* was in the bottom of the drawer where the stash used to be?)

Instead of using pot to deal with life, I started using recovery. I got a sponsor and met with him every week. I went to more meetings. I took service positions, including being an online penpal for people in far-away places. I was being of use to others! People started telling me they appreciated my support, that they wanted what I had. It was unreal.

I used to tell people that I had come to MA to quit smoking pot, and I had gotten all these "extras": support, meetings, friends, step work, better tools for life, my sponsor, and a spiritual program. It took me a year to figure it out: These things weren't "extra" at all. They were precisely *how* I quit smoking pot. Those things *are* the program of recovery!

Think about this: 11½ of the 12 Steps say nothing about using. It's all about, as the cover of our book says, "a return to living." And that, I believe, is what we mean when we say "beyond our wildest dreams!"



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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Send all articles, inquiries and correspondence to:
ANLP@marijuana-anonymous.org
or
A New Leaf
P.O. Box 4314
North Hollywood, CA 91617

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The Roving Reporter

Happy New Year gang. I hope you had a fun and safe New Year's Party. Did you get to sing *Auld Lang Syne* at midnight? As a reporter, I dug deep to find out the origin of this song. This popular New Year's melody means the "Good Old Days," and the song asks us if we should forget old acquaintances. As a marijuana addict, I can attest this is a great idea. By letting go of so-called friends and self-serving using buddies, I have eliminated major obstacles in the pursuit of a happy, healthy recovery. I still have "normy" friends, but today my friends and my life are centered around Marijuana Anonymous. I now have the "Good New Days" to look forward to.

The question for February is "What are some of your New Year resolutions?"

Collective Power: A place to start looking by Jared B.

It is clear to us who attend Marijuana Anonymous meetings that forming a connection with a higher power is important and highly beneficial for our recovery. Being that it is an extremely variable and personal matter, it is often the most difficult and controversial of the M.A. topics. Many people (myself included) first walk into these rooms with an uncomfortable feeling associated with the word "God". This commonly goes hand in hand with resenting or rejecting religion. The key to getting over such disconnectedness can be found in the possibility of spiritual fulfillment without the need for religion. Equally important a concept is that religious beliefs need not be absolute. Personalizing a spiritual program by picking and choosing beliefs and practices from different religions can be fun and ultimately rewarding. It's your choice!

Looking at cultures throughout human history, we see the universal desire for a higher power. This evidence allowed me to be more accepting of the concept of a greater meaning during times of spiritual doubt. I knew that the generations of humans who have searched for something deeper couldn't *all* be wrong. I eventually came to understand the potential benefits of experiencing a power that is beyond my control, such as looking up at the sky and thinking about the vastness of the universe, or watching the ocean waves that could envelop me without hesitation. These thoughts can lead to looking past our easily limited perspective, and beyond our everyday activities. If we choose to let go of what is not in our hands in the first place, then what seems like a priority can become very insignificant. Suddenly it may be more important to smile to someone on the street, than to buy that CD that you wanted. This process helped me begin to understand the greatness beyond us. Still, weeks go by when I forget to acknowledge the greater existence that is beyond my immediate perception.

This is what has become to be my personal understanding of a higher power: We are all part of the all, but not all in ourselves. We are each a piece of what becomes Everything as a whole. Collectively, we contain the greatness that is beyond us. Some would express this same point of view by saying that we each have a piece of God within us. The manifestation of this power is one of the explanations for each person being unique, creative, and sensitive. Unfortunately, this wonderful gift is often turned into a burden of self-defeat.

Many of us become addicts because we are highly sensitive. Many of us become highly sensitive after becoming addicts. In either case, we are very perceptive of the good as well as the bad. Deep down, all of us know that we are precious and have meaning, and that feeds a sense of pride and confidence that does not always trigger us to act on our true values. This is also a reason for rejecting power that is beyond our own, especially the idea of asking that power for help. We must remember that the piece of "God" within us does not make us Gods.

In order to overcome our weaknesses, we come together as a group to combine our individual wisdom and create a greater strength. The piece of the higher power that is present within each of us becomes more dominant with every added member. The group as a whole focuses on combining each person's inner strength, and reminds us of the positive direction that we desire for our lives. This accomplishes what we cannot do as individuals. The whole is greater than the parts creating it. In our sharing, in our combined group experiences, the essence of the higher power is revealed, and the Divine is present.



2005 MA Convention

**Presidents Holiday Weekend February 18th to 20th 2005, at the beautiful Torrance Del Amo Marriott
Rooms are available Wednesday February 16th to Tuesday February 22nd at \$89 per night (1 to 4
people)**

**For reservations call 800-228-9290 by February 1st 2005 and state that you are with the MA
Convention**

Free self parking available (\$6 valet parking)

Convention registration begins at 4:00pm, Friday February 18th

The Convention ends at 3:00pm Sunday February 20th

Transportation to the Marriott will be available to and from LAX and Long Beach airports

		<u>Number</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Registration:	\$20.00 (\$25.00 after January 1 st)	_____	_____
Banquet:	\$40.00 per person	_____	_____
Includes:	Dinner, Banquet Show & Dance		
Dinner Choices:	Chicken ___ Mahi Mahi ___ Vegetable Wellington ___ *One choice per person Vegan entrée upon request		
Dance Only	\$5.00 per person	_____	_____
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Tee Shirts:	Women's Tanks		
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Donations to help another MA member share the convention experience are welcome _____

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MA Convention 2005
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For further information call Mike LB or Penny R. at 310-376-2400 or go to WWW.MA2005.com

MA WORLDWIDE

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

email: office@marijuana-anonymous.org

MA World Service Offices

PO Box 2912, Van Nuys, CA 91404
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San Francisco (Dist. 1)

PO Box 460024, San Francisco, CA
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415.419.3555
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MA Online (District 13)

PO Box 2912, Van Nuys, CA 91404
800-766-6779

Chester Co., PA Chapter

PO Box 194, Sadsburyville, PA 19362
610.622.9243

Colorado

303.607.7516

Denton, TX

outofthefogDFW@yahoo.com

Ithaca, NY

ma_ithaca@yahoo.com

Omaha, NB

omaha_ma@hotmail.com

Rogue Valley, OR Chapter

541.941.2995

Westmont, NJ

JERSEYMA12@yahoo.com

Australia

MA Australia

0.500.502.654

maaustralia@yahoo.com.au

London, England Chapter

07940.503438

New Zealand

MA Service Centre, PO Box 74-386

Market Road, Auckland 3, New Zealand

649.846.6822

Austin, TX

higherground_austin@yahoo.com

Chicago

Ma_chicago@hotmail.com

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 5

Mike LB	1/10/87	18 years
Cigar Matt	1/13/88	17 years
Melody W.	1/16/89	16 years
Dave G.	1/20/92	13 years
Sue "Tracker"	1/5/96	9 years
Andrea	1/4/99	6 years
Tony R.	1/2/03	2 years
Ahryn	1/15/03	2 years
Alissa	1/27/04	1 year!

District 7

Steve S	11/25/99	5 years
Jeff M.	11/8/96	8 years
Manny	12/6/98	6 years
Liz M	12/08/02	2 years
Jay	11/22/01	3 years
John	11/16/92	12 years

District 6

Ben B.	1/4/98	7 years
Dave K.	1/15/89	16 years
Judy S.	1/16/95	10 years
Loren N.	1/14/90	15 years

District 3

Bobbe	1/26/97	8 years
Carol G.	1/15/90	15 years
Andy C.	1/21/98	7 years
Bill L.	1/28/03	2 years
Bob F.	1/1/95	10 years
Douglas F.	1/13/03	2 years
James S.	1/28/97	8 years
Mark S.	1/30/02	3 years
Will N.	1/06/96	9 years

District 11

Surfer John	1/1/99	6 years
Mike D	12/15/97	7 years
Sheila	1/15/04	1 year!

Celebrating 246 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!

The Trials and Tribulations of Abe Normal

This is Abe, Abe Norml. Abe has a problem. He loves to smoke weed all day long and hang out with his dog Sparky. His girlfriend is MJ and best friend is BUD. Follow Abe through his journey to recovery.

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