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# A NEW LEAF

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## My Story

by Steve S.

Hi, my name is Steve and my sobriety date is November 14, 1998.

### WHAT IT WAS LIKE THEN.

I got high for the first time in 1986 (a sophomore in high school). I really liked it. It flipped a switch inside of me. I was hooked.

My freshman year of college (away from home) was when my pot smoking really increased. I first began to notice I had a problem when I was regularly missing class. Sometimes I would make it to class (completely stoned of course). So what solution did I have to this dilemma? A stoner's solution...don't go to class and feel confused, just stay in my dorm room and get more stoned. This was the first time when I had the thought "I should probably stop getting high every day."

I joined the Army Reserve and went to boot camp between my freshman and sophomore year of college. I was having trouble stopping my pot smoking for 30 days in a row to pass my drug test. Well, I was able to put together 30 days without smoking pot and passed my drug test and off to boot camp I went. When I got back home I wasn't getting high on a daily basis anymore. This was the pattern for about 6 months. Then I got a job at a bar and met a guy that sold pot. I became his "best friend."

I instantly became a daily pot smoker once again. I was going to college, in the Army, and working at a bar at night. I was missing class again to smoke. I bought a car simply to drive it around and get high. Sometimes when my car was broken, I would walk around my neighborhood at night and smoke a joint like a cigarette. I wanted to stop getting high at this point but didn't know how.

I lucked into a job overseas and moved to in Paris, France. However, I couldn't find marijuana there so instead I smoked hashish every day. After a year in Paris, I moved back to the states, hooked up with my "best friend" and got high every day. I found a pretty good job that paid well so I was now able to afford much more pot than before.

During the last 2 years of my drug use I got high in the morning before work, smoking a joint while driving in my car to work, smoked a joint while driving in my car at lunch, smoked in my car while driving home after work, and then smoked a joint right before I went to bed at night. This was my pattern. The freedom of choice had been removed from my life. I could not simply choose not to get high, because I got high no matter what I chose.

### WHAT HAPPENED?

Well, I never lost my job, never lost my car, never lost my apartment, and always paid ALL my bills on time. So I didn't think I had a problem. Regardless, I wanted to stop smoking pot all the time because I wasn't getting "high" anymore but rather I would have to smoke pot to not be irritable towards others and to "relax." I didn't know it at the time but I needed the drug to function "normally." As hard as I tried, I could never get that "high" feeling I had when I was new to smoking pot. Now I was sick and tired

of wanting to quite and not being able to. And finally, I was sick and tired of being sick and tired.

My first meeting was a Narcotics Anonymous meeting in 1997. I didn't relate. Man, THESE people had problems...not me (I thought). They are getting arrested, getting in fights, loosing their jobs, getting divorced, etc. Not one of these things was happening to me. I was different.

Since it very easy to hear differences in people's stories, my sponsor told me to keep going to my daily meetings but focus on the similarities. I was to call him after each meeting and tell him 3 similarities I heard during the meeting.

Soon thereafter, I started up the first Marijuana Anonymous meeting in Chicago in February 1999. It is still going strong today.

Early in my recovery, my sponsor told me that if I did 5 things everyday my chance of having a sober day was almost guaranteed. These 5 things were (1) ask your higher power to help you stay sober today, (2) go to a meeting, (3) call your sponsor, (4) read some recovery material, and (5) thank your higher power at the end of the day for keeping you sober. Looking back on my relapses, I had forgotten to (or didn't want to) do one of those 5 things...and it was usually #2 or #3.

### WHAT IT'S LIKE NOW.

I never thought the day would come to pass where I don't think about pot. Now months go by without thinking about it. What I did, who I saw, where I went, all centered around getting high. Now my world is so far away from revolving around pot that the only times I think about pot is (1) when I smell it from someone smoking it on the street or (2) when I see some news item about people trying to legalize it.

I talk to my old "best friend" 2-3 times a year now just to say hi and see if he's ready to get sober whereas before I talked to him 2-3 times a day to see if he was ready to get high.

You know, when I first came around 5 years ago, people told me that in sobriety my life would be better than I have ever imagined. Has it? No. Even though life isn't "better that I would have ever imagined," it's life. It has its ups and downs. The most significant differences are: (1) I am here to enjoy life and it is not centered around getting high, (2) I am no longer sick and tired of being sick and tired, and (3) I have the freedom of choice again.

Something I read that I keep reminding myself of everyday is "If you don't get high today, you'll never get high...because it's always today."

I love to hear from people in the program, especially newcomers so please feel free to contact me at [ma\\_chicago@hotmail.com](mailto:ma_chicago@hotmail.com) and, if you're in the Chicago area, attend one of our meetings.

*\*\*Don't forget about MA Online. This is our chance to share our experience, strength and hope with a whole new group of newcomers who have never been served before. They need our help. They need your help. Why not log on at [ma-online.org](http://ma-online.org) and give it a try?*



## 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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We send approximately 681 copies of *A New Leaf* each month to subscribers in 31 states

## Share On Tradition 5

I am grateful for, and humbled by, Tradition Five. I have been clean & sober for just over 18 months, during which I have attended weekly meetings steadily, with commitments in at least 2 mtgs. in any given week. It's easy to get caught up in celebrating my recovery and that of my fellow members, but we must not forget about the "addict who still suffers" for, then, we would forget what it was like for us before *we* found recovery and then our own recovery could well be jeopardized. As it happens, I am deeply involved in "carrying the message to the addict who still suffers", as chairperson and panel leader for our district's Hospitals & Institutions Speaker Panel. This commitment does me more good than I can put into words! and it also reminds me, at least twice a month, of "each group's primary purpose". For this and for the Fellowship of Marijuana Anonymous, I am eternally grateful.

Tres

Hello members of M.A.,

The 2003 MAWS Conference voted to create Life with Hope workbooks. A "willingness to participate poll" was circulated to the various districts to determine if each district wanted a part in the creation of the workbook. I am happy to inform you that all the districts are willing to participate. Each district has full control over design and content of their step and will be submitted for review and vote at the 2005 MAWS Conference.

Here are the results of the random lottery determining which step each district is responsible for, for the creation of the Life with Hope Workbooks. The Literature Committee thanks you for your cooperation in this matter. If any work has been done prior to the 2004 Conference, please have your delegates bring the material to the conference for review and suggestions. More information on the workbooks will be given at the conference. If anyone is interested in helping in the creation of the workbook, please contact your local district for more information.

- District 1-San Francisco—STEP # 8 (eight)
- District 2-East Bay—STEP # 11 (eleven)
- District 3-South Bay—STEP # 1 (one)
- District 4-Seattle—STEP # 6 (six)
- District 5-Orange County/S.D.—STEP # 10 (ten)
- District 6-LA County North—STEP # 5 (five)
- District 7-LA County South—STEP # 2 (two)
- District 8-New York—STEP # 4 (four)
- District 9-Santa Cruz—STEP # 3 (three)
- District 10-LA County East—STEP # 12 (twelve)
- District 11-Portland—STEP # 7 (seven)
- District 12-North Bay—STEP # 9 (nine)

## I NEVER HAD A PROBLEM WITH ALCOHOL

by Mike D.

I never had a problem with alcohol. I never really liked the taste of it unless it was sweetened, soured, or spiced up in some way. Or used as my social lubricant. In the last two years I have had less than a dozen drinks. Not a problem, in my opinion. When I came into the program 2 years ago, my sponsor told me that in order to take chips, I need to be free from alcohol. And if I didn't have a problem with alcohol, then I shouldn't have a problem without it. He told me to pour all the alcohol in my house down the drain. I can do that!!! No sweat!! And I did!!

I started to go to clubs to see bands that I love. I loved going. Sometimes I would have a bottle of water, or a coke or sometimes a beer. No sweat!! I felt I was a unique person in the program that can handle alcohol responsibly. And I did, very responsibly. I had dropped my sponsor shortly after pouring all the alcohol down the drain. After all, I wasn't like him! I was unique! I was very stubborn and angry that the program wouldn't let me have a drink once in a while and still get chips. I stopped going to land meetings, and only attended online ones, thinking they had an attitude of tolerance. I felt I was finally accepted for who I am. But I still didn't have a sponsor. And I knew if I got one, he would require me not to drink.

Soon I became of service to ma-online leading meetings, elected as GSP (group service representative), and eventually elected chairman of the MA-ONLINE district, while still thinking it was okay to drink responsibly. The service manual clearly states that district officers "should" have one-year clean AND sober time requirements. They said I "should", not "must" be free from alcohol. Ah ha!! A loophole I was looking for. So I continued to serve the best way I could, feeling very proud of my progress not perfection attitude.

I went to the MA convention last year, and had the best time of my life. I couldn't imagine a hotel full of ex-potheads having as much fun as we did. I remember a hotel guest that noticed all the fun we were having, and heard the word pot used over the microphone, and asked, "What kind of convention is this? A pot grower's convention?" I nearly busted a seam laughing my ass off. And at the microphone on the last day of the convention I proudly stated I had 15 months clean in front of the entire audience. But secretly I still had a drink once in a while. What a hypocrite I turned out to be. It was like I was in two different programs. The one that accepts drinking, and the one that doesn't. Or so I thought.

About 4 months after that I flew half way across the country to attend the wedding of one of my best friends online. I danced with another online friend that I met face to face at the convention, and after a couple of days we fell in love. When she asked if I was alcohol free, I lied!! I told her that I didn't remember when my last drink was. Truth was my last drink was at a club the night before I flew out to the wedding. Then HP put it before us, she found out I had what she called, "a dirty clean date." She wanted me to change my clean date to the day of my last drink. I was angry she asked me to throw away the 19+ months I was weed free. That I had to start over because of a few beers I didn't have a problem with.

Shortly after that, I read the share from Vicki A. I identified with her struggles completely. I still repeat to myself her words of realization. To put it in her words, "I stopped drinking. Motivated by the growth and progress of others, and out of respect to them, the program, the steps, and my HP, I made the decision that playing by the suggested rules was more important than celebrating my uniqueness." I couldn't argue with that. So I decided to change my clean date to 6/6/03. I went back to my land meeting and gave back all the chips I had earned there. I was humiliated beyond belief. I was able to take a 30-day chip, and on the way home, was severely depressed. The addict inside me was telling me to go ahead and get high. I would only have lost 30 days. I wanted to act out so bad, to make the hurt go away. But I realized that if I went out, I might never come back. I might lose more than 30 days. I might lose my life. At the following district meeting, I told the other officers about changing my clean date, and asked what they thought I should do. It was clearly shown I needed to step down. I felt very ashamed and cried most of the night, but was assured by others in attendance that were in shock of what just transpired, that they admired my courage to do the right thing.

The woman in my life pushed hard for me to get another sponsor. It didn't take me long to decide who I would like to help me. I knew the first time I heard him speak. I could relate to everything he said. After we met later, and he said he would help me, I cried my eyes out, feeling embarrassed about it deep inside. He gave me a hug, told me that he could see I was serious by the look in my eyes, and that everything will be ok. I really appreciated his kindness and understanding.

# MA WORLDWIDE

For Land and Online Meeting Schedules Go To: <http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org>  
email: [office@marijuana-anonymous.org](mailto:office@marijuana-anonymous.org)

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**South Bay (District 3)**

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**LA County So. (District 7)**

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**New York (District 8)**

PO Box 1244, Cooper Station  
New York, NY 10276  
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PO Box 3003, Santa Cruz, CA 95063  
831.427.4088

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**QUESTIONS?**

**CALL 949-355-6230**

# 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**

Raquel A. 5/26/99 5 years  
Suki G. 5/26/99 9 years

**District 5**

Norm B. 5/30/83 21 years  
John R. 5/07/87 11 years  
Sean F. 5/11/02 2 years

**District 3**

Cindy M. 5/07/03 1 year!  
Dana S. 5/14/02 2 years  
Lily E. 5/17/96 8 years  
Ben 5/30/02 2 years  
Bob E. 5/17/96 8 years  
Brent W. 5/30/02 2 years  
Steve W. 5/30/98 6 years

**Texas**

Sara A. 5-20-00 4 years

**Celebrating 81 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!**