



a new leaf

a publication of marijuana anonymous

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Surprises in Sobriety by Larry L., District 8

I decided to stop drinking, and smoking pot as well, on March 1st of 1992 after I finally joined Alcoholics Anonymous. I actually quit drinking on the memorable date of February 29th I was so sick of it. Truth is I stopped drinking to have more enjoyment of my last day of smoking pot. That I did on the West Side Highway of New York. I threw down my last joint, well OK my last roach, onto the highway. I was done. I had finished my alcohol the night before and have not picked up a drink since. It has been 18 years. I think the fact that I quit on the leap year date may have had something to do with it. I cannot say the same for my companion marijuana. It still had places to bring me.

I became very active in AA. Five years into my sobriety I moved to Florida. My small group of friends there were all marijuana smokers. I was active in AA and had sober friends as well. One night after losing a promising job, I was at a laundromat in the middle of the night. Someone was out there smoking a joint. I got curious and before I knew it I was right next to it. That was all I needed. After eight years of abstaining, just the scent of the joint sent me running toward it. Marijuana had arrived in Florida.

At first it was great. I felt good. I was in another world. I was living the illusion of control. I also was not dealing very much with what was going on in my life. I remained determined not to pick up a drink

and thus sever my AA ties. I did not want that. Yet by smoking pot I soon began going to fewer AA meetings. Sponsorship fell by the wayside as did service. Marijuana had me all to herself.

After two years of smoking pot in Florida I decided it was time to move home to New Jersey. My brother was ill with the AIDS virus. I knew this for awhile and wanted to be there for him and his wife. Besides I was not making much progress among the palm trees and sandy beaches where I was living. I moved back to New Jersey. I returned to my home group AA meetings, and hid my pot smoking from everyone.

My brother became ill and I moved in with him and his wife. I quit smoking pot for I guess a month or two while I dealt with his illness and his eventual death. I don't know how I was able to do this but I am forever grateful that I did. I was sober for him and present. If I had gone back to drinking it may not have been this way.

It was just after my brother's death that I needed an outlet to share the grief and pain of this loss. I found myself returning to AA and to a support group for people who stutter of which I am one. These meetings I went to were held at the New York Gay and Lesbian Community Center. I noticed one day there was a meeting there called "Marijuana Anonymous". I was incredulous. How can they have a group for marijuana addicts? That is laughable. It's not an addiction.

It's as ridiculous as the notion of ice hockey being played in Florida. I couldn't believe it. However I did see an ice hockey game when I lived in Florida. And I was dealing with smoking too much marijuana. Maybe I should investigate. It would at least give me yet another forum to unload and share my pain. I went in and stayed in MA for about three months.

Marijuana was not finished with me yet. Somehow I thought I had gotten over the loss of my brother and wished to resume my life. That meant picking up, literally, where I had left off with marijuana. I abandoned MA and would not return for another three years. Of course my using was ever-present. I was delaying my grieving and just hoping things would get better. Somehow I stubbornly refused to give in to drinking, more so because it was my only sane link left to life. I also liked my unique sobriety date of February 29th, never mind that it was now eroded by a two year marijuana relapse.

Well, after three more years of dancing around with marijuana, life came knocking at my door. It was time to wake up. I had just turned 50, I had lost yet another job, and my unemployment had run out. Work was hard to find. I was working a security job and they decided to drug test. I knew I failed the test and would soon lose this job. Now what? I came back to Marijuana Anonymous on May

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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 reflect the opinions of Marijuana Anonymous as a whole.

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and click on the newsletter tab.

Willow's story, clean and sober since 12-3-98

I can trace my problems back to the beginning, in early childhood. I am an abuse survivor. I felt I was responsible for bad things. I felt like I could never be good enough, like nobody wanted me, nobody loved me. I became very timid and shy; I barely spoke above a whisper.

My mom was a very angry person, my sister and I used to hide from her. I am still afraid of anger. I don't want anyone to be angry with me for fear of rejection. My dad expected perfection. Dad always thought I could do better. There were two ways to do things, "Dad's way or the wrong way." If I made a mistake, well then, I didn't do it Dad's way, because otherwise it would have been perfect. I felt like I could never measure up to his standards and I felt constant rejection from him.

I started smoking pot after I graduated from college and continued to smoke throughout most of my adult life. It was a way to be accepted, be part of the group, be "cool", at least that's what I thought at first. I had always felt like an outsider and this was a way that I could be included.

When I smoked pot, it was going to be at a time when I didn't have to take any responsibility. Soon it became a way of escape from all the demons in my mind. It worsened my depression to a point where I became suicidal. When I became suicidal, I was admitted to the hospital for detox and then I attended an intensive outpatient program. Also, I began seeing a psychiatrist and I have continued to see him every week for my depression.

I started attending MA meetings in my city every week. At first I

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Delegate Report - District 5

- 1) We are in the 6th year of operating under our own tax ID #.
- 2) The last item in our DSC meetings is ongoing MA service manual study.
- 3) As a result of current transparency and trustee reporting from MAWS, we have resumed sending donations to MAWS.
- 4) Our six meetings are stronger than they have ever been.
- 5) We have an ad hoc committee to explore feasibility and logistics of a fixed conference site for approximately three years (somewhere in the greater Los Angeles area).
- 6) We will probably raise the sobriety time requirement for our own future delegates. We would like to see that happen at the Conference level as well. When MAWS started all we had was one to two years. We've grown way past that now. Increasing the time will help insure that delegates will have had the time to be of service in their own DSCs prior to jumping into Conferences.
- 7) In District 5 we sell LWH workbooks below the actual cost.
- 8) In District 5 all literature and chips are free to our meetings. The DSC buys or produces these items from the meeting's 7th Tradition donations.
- 9) Two years ago the District 5 DSC voted to keep all District treasurers as part of finance committee for any future problems and to continue service sponsorship.

Surprises....

(continued from Page 1)

28th, 2005. I really don't remember the exact date, as I returned out of necessity. I couldn't afford to wait for another leap year!

The security job I held never looked at the drug test. I remained working there and discovered MA Online, a great source of support. I began attending MA meetings in New York City. I became active in a Rockland County, New York group that was a 30 mile, 40 minute trip from where I lived. I represented this group at the district level for two years. I handled the sobriety chips for District 8 last year. In 2008 I was selected to attend the MAWS business conference in California. I co-chaired a meeting for one year in New York and then served as its GSR.

During sobriety I had the chance to change careers and move to a high rise in New Jersey's largest city. In sobriety I take risks, with support, and move forward to new and exciting experiences. After living in 12 different places and having 15 jobs in my lifetime I am finally where I want to be. It is working out. I say a simple "Thank you God" frequently throughout every day. Change has been a nice surprise.

I am grateful to be 5 years sober, and not to have had a drink for 18 years. This is quite a unique combination but I am so glad it played out this way. I was truly saved by MA. My story could have turned out very differently. I could still be in my grief. I could never have left my addiction. I could have gone back to drinking and maybe not have survived at all. I am so grateful that MA is in my life. And, oh, did I mention I am thankful for Leap Year day too? Surprises happen in sobriety.

How this pothead finally was able to "let go"

Halloween Weekend, 2009. Indio, CA. Phish's Festival 8.

Sometime, I have no idea when, during my first 48 hours at the festival I lost my purple grateful dead dancing bears bandanna. I remember when I reached down to my belt loop to grab it and it was gone. I was so upset, and confused. I then figured it must have just fallen off. So I looked down, and all around - 40,000 people, but no purple grateful dead dancing bears bandanna. I continued to look for it and continued getting more peeved.

Heading back to our campsite, I continued to look, and retrace my steps, quite a frustrating and scenery-stealing scenario. I thought, "It must be in my tent". So I looked. It was not there. Then I *intellectually* realized it was gone. However, *spiritually*, I still needed work. I *knew* it was lost, but not my whole self *believed* it.

Then, knowing I needed to "let go" of this inconsequential, yet energy-stealing loss, I had a flash of insight in how to do so.

I decided to visualize in great detail the bandanna; the shape of it, with the knot tied to precisely my head's circumference, the exact hue of purple, the white bears, and other symbols on it, the feel of it on my head and in my hands etc... Then, knowing it was indeed gone, I decided to visualize it flying off over the waters of a beach I frequented in my youth. I visualized it getting smaller and smaller like a kite flying away. (When I was a child I was flying a kite, and did not tie the string to the spool, and when the string was all the way out, the kite sailed away, never to be seen by me again.)

I visualized my bandanna in great detail (best of my ability) sailing over the blue waters of my

childhood beach and disappearing just as my kite did so long ago. The entire visualization process took about 3 minutes. When completed I still couldn't "let go" absolutely to not having that bandanna anymore, however, I was waaaaay closer.

Very shortly after, when I stood up, and got out of my tent, and decided to not let that one loss ruin even one more minute of my festival I did "let go". I then let go of EVER finding that bandanna again. The bandanna that I only saw ONE time ever for sale!

Interesting Epilogue:

After many, many attempts to find and buy that bandanna again, I found it on sale at the NY Historical Society gift shop in April of 2010 (They had an exhibit from the UC Santa Cruz Grateful Dead Archive). Furthermore, I paid LESS for it than the original one I bought!

Perhaps a similar visualization process, adapted towards your own history might aid in the often baffling and frequently confusing concept of "letting go".
--Anonymous

ROVING REPORTER

Question for September

What was the first thing you liked about Marijuana Anonymous?

Step Nine

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Tradition Nine

M.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Submit your answers to your Bureau Chief, or or online, by August 17.

marijuana anonymous worldwide

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District 12 North Bay, CA

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District 15 Long Island, NY

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District 17 Denmark

info@ma-kbh.dk

For a complete listing of all meetings visit www.marijuana-anonymous.org

Willow's story...

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was afraid that I would be rejected because I thought the people would all be "fully recovered potheads" and perfect. When I attended my first meeting, I saw that everyone was just like me, and everyone was so nice! At first, when I listened to the promises, when they said "we will love you until you love yourself"; I thought, "yeah, right no one is going to love me; I am so unlovable, so unworthy." Imagine my surprise when I found out that they did love me! I was welcomed with open arms.

I met my sponsor within 3 months of attending MA. We worked through the Steps, which

was so helpful to me. I was able to realize that a lot of the concepts that I had accepted as facts were based upon my misinterpretation of childhood beliefs. My fears of childhood had stayed with me and I hadn't been able to discard them. I came to understand a lot about myself and what behaviors I had that led to addiction.

Now when I have a problem that baffles me, I go through the Steps to find a solution. I make a gratitude list every day; this helps me focus on the positive things in my life. I have participated in MA by doing service: hosting, DSC member, MAWS delegate, chairperson, sponsor. Service helps me reach out to others.

One of the first things I learned about in recovery was a Higher Power. When I was growing up, I was taught that God was loving, forgiving, and accepting. I liked the idea of a Higher Power because it was a spiritual concept instead of a religious concept. I learned to turn my problems over to my HP and I learned to accept my HP into my life. By having a HP, I have experienced love, acceptance, and serenity. I thank my HP for another day clean and sober.

Recovery has changed my life; I never knew I could be so happy, free and joyful. Life is good; dreams come true.



birthdays

Celebrating 147 years of sobriety in this issue!

Want your sobriety date published? Let your Bureau Chief know or see ANL contact information on page 2. Bureau Chiefs are encouraged to submit Birthdays that, a) HAVE occurred, b) HAVE NOT been published and, c) are not older than 45 days.

District 3

Pam L.	6/23/01	9 yrs.
Kristen C.	6/24/04	6 yrs.
John L.	6/27/05	6 yrs.
Steve S.	7/5/97	13 yrs.
Matt P.	7/7/08	2 yrs.
Geoff K.	7/12/08	2 yrs.
Chris B.	7/14/08	2 yrs.
Laura D.	7/15/07	3 yrs.
Pavel R.	7/18/06	4 yrs.
Michael H.	7/22/08	2 yrs.

District 5

Stephanie	7/1/09	1 year!
John McC	7/2/91	19 yrs.
Sean F.	7/4/02	8 yrs.
Ryan H.	7/7/07	3 yrs.

District 7

Heshie L.	6/7/07	3 yrs.
Steve H.	6/25/05	5 yrs.
Matthew B.	7/1/07	3 yrs.

District 8

Missy F.	6/25/99	11 yrs.
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District 11

Alycia S.	6/26/08	2 yrs.
Peter C.	6/27/08	2 yrs.
Juliet J.	7/4/09	1 year!
Brandon R.	7/5/94	16 yrs.

District 13

<i>Phoenix, AZ</i>		
Eric R.	7/17/09	1 year!

Other Areas

<i>Raleigh, NC</i>		
Davy O'	7/18/87	23 yrs.