



MAPS

Bulletin of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies

Emotionally powerful anecdotes, as well as clinical research, are needed in the effort to communicate to a wary culture the potential value of psychedelics and marijuana. A synchronistic chance discussion at a recent neighborhood festival brought home to me the persuasive value of the moving personal report. While continuing to chronicle scientific developments, MAPS will try to leaven its reporting with a few well-chosen personal accounts intended to illustrate the potential benefits to even the most conservative members of our society of the resumption of research into psychedelic drugs and marijuana.

My family (my wife, Lynne and our kids, Eden and Lilah) went to Belmont Town Day in mid-May, shortly after we moved to Belmont, Massachusetts, just four miles from Harvard Square and the Kennedy School of Government. We made this move to make it easier for me to devote more of my time to writing a dissertation analyzing potential policies for the regulation of the medical use of psychedelics.

We were talking at Town Day with the owner of a water purification company about the quality of the local water when he pointed to a couple at the next booth looking at an exhibit of a group called Belmont Against Racism. "That's ex-Boston Mayor Ray Flynn and his wife," he told us. Mayor Flynn had recently returned from Rome where he had been the Clinton Administrations' representative to the Vatican and was now running for the Congressional seat to be vacated by Joe Kennedy, Jr.

When Mayor Flynn and his wife walked by, we all said hello and struck up a conversation. I mentioned that I had studied the medical use of marijuana at the Kennedy School, and Mayor Flynn asked me what I thought about the issue. I cited research about marijuana's efficacy and said that I didn't buy the argument that the medical use of marijuana would send the wrong message to our kids. Mayor Flynn was listening but didn't seem entirely in agreement.

Then, something magical happened. The owner of the water purification company shared with us that his wife had died of cancer several years ago and that the only medicine that helped her with the severe nausea associated with her chemotherapy was smoked marijuana. He said she was not a recreational drug user and would never have used marijuana if she hadn't needed it medically. He added that she had tried Marinol, the legally available oral THC pill, but that it had not worked for her, nor had any of the other legally available medicines. Only smoked marijuana worked, making her last days a little more comfortable.

I couldn't have dreamed up a more compelling account of the need for medical marijuana. Mayor Flynn then told us that emotional stories like were just what he needed to hear to be convinced of the potential value of the medical use of marijuana, and that personal testimonials as well as research provided the political cover people in office would need to advocate a policy shift. As Mayor Flynn and his wife walked on, I was left feeling that there is a deep reservoir of support for fundamental social change, if only we work to bring it to the surface.

As you think of the goals shared by our growing MAPS community, please consider speaking to just one friend about joining MAPS. Word of mouth is the best way for public officials to hear about medical marijuana and also the most effective way for MAPS to grow and find new members. As MAPS grows, it will be able to work more dynamically for a time when people who need unconventional medicines can get them, and can focus on their healing process rather than on fear of punishment.

Best wishes for a full and productive summer, Rick Doblin, MAPS President