

Letter from the Editor **David Jay Brown**



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Editing this *Bulletin* completes my eight month commitment with MAPS as their Guest Editor—a spot that that I was temporarily filling, while MAPS found a new Director of Communications to replace Jag Davies, who is now working with the ACLU. (But joins us in this *Bulletin* to report on the legal logistics of MAPS vaporizer study that is being held up by NIDA.) The next issue of the *Bulletin* will be edited by Randolph Hencken, MAPS' new Director of Communications and Marketing. This issue of the *Bulletin* contains a warm introduction from Randy, so please join me in welcoming him to the MAPS community.

It's been a real pleasure working with everyone at MAPS these past few months, and an honor to be part of this dedicated team of public policy reformers and researchers. Although I'll be bowing offstage, and leaving you all in Randy's capable hands, this won't be the last that MAPS members will be seeing of me. I'll be back again as Guest Editor next Spring to compile and edit another special theme issue of the *Bulletin*. This special issue will be devoted to the theme of "ecology and psychedelics." Increased ecological awareness is an important lasting effect of many psychedelic experiences, and at this juncture in our species' evolution it certainly seems like a timely topic for discussion. Please contact me if you are interested in contributing to this special issue of the *Bulletin*: davidjay@maps.org

Twenty years ago, when I was in graduate school studying psychobiology, what I wanted more than anything else was to be able to conduct psychedelic drug research—but the opportunities just weren't available. Today, things are different. Thanks to MAPS, and sister organizations like the Heffter Foundation, psychedelic drug research is once again a legitimate area of scientific study. Last Fall I was delighted to be able to summarize this exciting new research in a feature article for *Scientific American Mind* magazine. (Available in the media section at: www.maps.org) In the article I discussed the revival of medical research into LSD, psilocybin, ibogaine, MDMA, and DMT—and stressed the vital role that MAPS is playing in this psychedelic renaissance. The research that I dreamed about doing as a graduate student has now become a reality for many scientists around the world, and the

future of psychedelic medicine looks very bright indeed.

I'm thrilled to be able to help report about this new wave of psychedelic drug research. The *Bulletin* that you're holding in your hands represents the very cutting-edge of this research, precious reports from the exciting frontiers of psychedelic medicine. If this issue of the *MAPS Bulletin* were to be suddenly transported back in time, and land on the lap of a frustrated psychedelic drug researcher in the early 1970s, she would likely sing her praise to the Heavens. For example, in this issue Swiss psychiatrist Dr. Peter Gasser reports on the first six months of his LSD-assisted psychotherapy study with people suffering from anxiety associated with advanced stage life-threatening disease. This is the first government-approved scientific study with LSD and human subjects on planet Earth in over thirty-five years!

Thirty-five years is a pretty long time to just be sitting on a substance that has—in previous studies—demonstrated so many remarkable abilities for safely treating a wide range of difficult-to-treat medical conditions.

Also very exciting are Dr. Peter Oehen's and Dr. Michael Mithoefer's reports on their MDMA/Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) studies. The preliminary results from both of these studies, which are reported on in this issue, are extremely encouraging, and Dr. Mithoefer's Phase II study is now almost complete. I'm fully convinced that MAPS—along with our sister organizations—will eventually accomplish our mission of making MDMA, LSD, psilocybin, DMT, mescaline, ibogaine, and marijuana into legal prescription medicines. It looks like MDMA will probably be the first. The forces of evolution are with us, to be sure, but part of the reason that I'm so confident about this is a result of my personal interactions with Dr. Rick Doblin, founder and president of MAPS.

I met Rick in 1994 at a conference in Los Angeles, sponsored by the Laura Huxley Foundation, called "Children: Our Ultimate Investment," which addressed children's issues in our present society. Within moments of meeting Rick, I witnessed his trademark, closed-mouthed grin—reminiscent of an MDMA afterglow—and after hearing him talk about his ideas for advancing psychedelic research, I was instantly charmed. Over the years, I've watched in awe at Rick's near-miraculous ability to communicate across great cultural divides, to patiently and persistently navigate his way through bureaucratic mazes and government blockades—that appeared impassable even to the Hindu deity Ganesh—and to make the seemingly impossible happen with psychedelic drug research.

Rick has an uncanny ability to communicate effectively with hard-nosed scientific researchers, cautious govern-

ment officials, frightened patients, curious students, concerned parents and teachers, counterculturally-minded trippers, skeptical mainstream journalists, and mystically-minded visionary artists. I think that this culture-bridging ability that Rick has so skillfully mastered is the secret to MAPS' great success, and this is why I think its success will only continue to snowball. I share Rick's vision and I believe in MAPS' mission, as do many people, across many disciplines. I think that making therapeutic psychedelic experiences legally available to all who need them is one of the most important things that we can be doing, and I look forward to the day when Rick can use his untapped shamanic skills as a fully-licensed and practicing psychedelic psychotherapist.

It seems pretty clear that our planet is currently in a deep ecological and spiritual crisis, and that there isn't a whole lot of time left to rescue our biosphere from serious damage. I've personally witnessed how psychedelic experiences can psychologically transform people, how those very human traits that seem to be at the root of our problems as a species—ecological blindness, greed, shortsightedness, rigid belief systems, ego-centeredness, fear, prejudice, anger, pain, etc.—can transform into a greater sense of compassion, empathy, insight, and ecological awareness. Personally, I don't know of anything else besides psychedelics that can so consistently and so completely transform people, in such positive, healthy ways, so quickly—over night, like Scrooge in *The Christmas Carol*. This knowledge motivates me, and it's why I believe so strongly in what MAPS is doing. I encourage you to contribute what you can to MAPS, to get involved and spread the word—because without you, and without your help, none of this would be possible.

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