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“Toward Freedom” is an Everything-Voluntary.com series sharing personal stories about the journey toward freedom. Archived stories can be found [here](#). Submit your story to the editor.

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The first time I remember even seeing the word “libertarian,” was in 1994, when I was twenty-five. Years prior to that, like most kids, I had no real philosophical or political leanings. Government was just something that happened to be there, like the landscape, or the weather. As I grew into my teens, however, I began to develop a kind of vague sense that something was wrong – perhaps even horribly so – with the way society was structured. I think the catalysts for this awakening process were things that many young people experience on the path to adulthood: I had my first few brushes with the police – mainly for underage drinking. The paychecks I earned at the several jobs I had over those years had numerous taxes taken out of them. Laws restricting ownership of guns seemed increasingly wrong. The police and the military had them, yet the government wanted to curtail others from doing so. I began, again, like many young people, to distrust and resent authority in all forms.

My new awareness, however, had no cohesive threads running through it. My rapidly developing beliefs didn’t fit into any form of traditional political paradigm. I wasn’t “right-wing.” I didn’t think the police should have many of the powers that they had. I didn’t think drugs should be illegal (after all, I was doing them). I didn’t think the government should have soldiers marching all over the world. But I wasn’t “left-wing” either: As stated, I liked guns, and thought people should be able to own them without asking permission from anyone. I thought people, regardless of how much money they had, should be able to keep that money without having the government confiscate it through taxation. I thought that public schools were run more like prisons and indoctrination centers than learning institutions, and that they should be privatized, and all associated property taxation ended. Indeed, if people were actually supposed to own their houses, how could they be taxed? I didn’t identify with either Republicans or Democrats. I settled for considering myself politically independent. I had no idea what I would do when I became old enough to vote. When I did get there, I did nothing. Based on my beliefs, there seemed no method of voting consistent with my principles.

But in 1994, I chanced upon an article written by one Sean Glennon in a free newspaper published in New Hampshire called *Seacoast Times*. Glennon was a far leftist, but the piece was about drug legalization, so it held my interest. In it, Glennon made mention of the fact

that the Libertarian Party candidate for governor, Steve Winter, was in favor of ending the drug war. This intrigued me. So much, in fact, that I looked up the Libertarian Party of New Hampshire's toll-free number in the phone book (the Internet was still in its infancy), and left a message requesting an information package. A few days later, a large envelope showed up in the mail. By the time I was done reading all the material therein, I had come to what was for me, at the time, a revelation. All those years, I had actually been a Libertarian without knowing it.

Or, that's what I thought.

I contacted the LPNH again, and let them know I wanted to get involved in some way. I was kind of excited. I now had some people I could vote for at election time, and a vehicle to advance the philosophy I had always, for the most part, embraced: The Libertarian Party. I went on to become Communications Director, won more media coverage for the LPNH than had accrued in all the prior years of their existence, and was awarded Activist of the Year in 1998.

But there were still some unresolved problems.

Probably the most daunting one was how to reconcile libertarian philosophy with the existence of government. Because, of course, if one follows the non-aggression principle to its ultimate (and only logical) conclusion, no government - not even a miniscule one - can function without the implementation of coercive force. This seemed paradoxical to the notion of a political party attempting to get candidates elected in order to then legislate into existence greater freedom. I wrestled with this concept for some time. I talked with a lot of other liberty-minded people. I questioned, then questioned again, my core beliefs. There were a lot of great books on the subject I now realize I should have been reading, but that didn't come until later. Things all came to a head for me in 2000 when, at the LPNH's annual convention, I publicly confronted the late, great Harry Browne on an issue which similarly challenged his candidacy for U.S. President, and the Libertarian Party's fundamental integrity. As a result of that somewhat discomfiting tableau, I resigned from any and all participation in politics, including voting altogether. I realized that I had become a true libertarian in the purest sense. I had become an anarchist. Or if you prefer, as many do, a Voluntarist - a believer in non-aggression and peaceful willing relationships amongst human beings instead of the imposed violence governments bring to bear against individuals. I now believe I am on the correct path in doing my part to bring about a truly free and prosperous society. I warmly invite one and all to join me.