



▲ The Persons We Have Harmed

It's Time to Pay the Piper, *By Rick R.*

How many of us show up at the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous ready to start exploring our past and all the issues that we have had with our fellow man? Not me!

I came here with a rationalizing, alcoholic mind, and the last thing I intended to do was to go searching for more things to hate about myself. The alcoholic within me was pointing the finger at them to minimize the appearance that I was at fault.

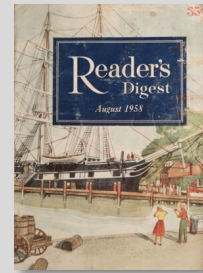
My mind was constantly spinning yarns to have the right answers ready should anyone question why I did the things I

did. In all my waking hours, I got no peace of mind unless I had something to drink in me, and when that happened, it diminished the need to care about other people. And, in fact, it immediately turned into drunken arrogance and often into verbal and physical confrontations.

A life lived by those standards can only end in destruction and when we have the option to drink it away, we can put it off indefinitely, but eventually we will have to pay the piper.

Not everyone can repair all the damage they have done in the past, to our fami-

AA Rehabilitates The Alcoholic Worker



August 1958

Companies used to fire the employee whose drinking got out of hand. Now many have found ways to save the worker his livelihood and themselves money.



"They have solved the drink problem."

p 17, Alcoholics Anonymous

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lies and friends, and that is simply because some of them have moved on and may not be concerned about what our plans are. And, they do not see the need to be involved in the drama that the alcoholic is going through. Especially with their memory of the failed good intentions of the past.

Until we have a history of changing our way of life and putting some time between us and that snapshot of our last drunken debacle, we cannot expect any recognition from them since they are not following us around every day recording our progress.

When it comes to making a list of all the persons we have harmed, the first thought that came to my mind was, how far do I go with this list. My thought on that is; what amount of peace of mind would I be satisfied with? The most obvious people are the ones that are closest to us such as family, friends, employers, and as I list those, I can spiral outward to the more remote people like relatives, friends from the past, and so on.

The last thing I hear questioned is who I owe amends to and again, the peace of mind issue sets the standard for who goes on the list. First off, if I have completely changed those old behaviors and have put them behind me, I have already mended my ways and all that is left to do is to acknowledge my past mistakes in the presence of the person receiving the amend. I find it easy to level the playing field by simply asking the question: "Have you ever done something that you really regretted?" The answer usually goes: "Of course, who hasn't?"

Next, I say, "Can we talk?" You can do this with anyone that you feel uncomfortable about, when you hear their name mentioned, and eventually you will run out of people that are constantly renting room in your brain.

In the rare occasion when a person responds to your effort to make things right, in a negative way, they may have issues of their own that we are not aware of, you have done all you can, and you can put it behind you. All that free space in your head adds up to peace of mind and you have the rest of your life to complete it.

▲ AA Never Fails

Central Bulletin, Vol 23 No 9, June, 1965

AA doesn't work on our own terms! Our guarantee of sustained sobriety can be achieved only if we study and apply the Twelve Steps thoroughly, and without questioning their validity and practicing the principles advocated in all our affairs.

Alcoholism is a lifetime disease. It is also a progressive disease. In the 30 years of AA existence, men and women in our fellowship of every degree of intelligence, education and social status, highly educated and hailing from well-respected circles. As well as those with little education have provided absolute proof that AA never fails - IF the candidate completely surrenders and follows the advice and examples of his successful advisors.

Sobriety is the beginning, not the end. The candidate must begin practicing a life of integrity in all his affairs. He must develop a faith in a Power Greater than himself, from faith in his successful sponsors to an ultimate faith in God. He must learn to trust Him completely, even when his pleas for material blessings are slow in coming.

AA doesn't work on our terms, but on the will of that Power greater than ourselves. Membership in AA doesn't guarantee great material wealth or success. But, does guarantee continued sobriety if a candidate disciplines himself or herself to listen to his successful predecessors, has sustained faith, discards all of his bad habits, learns to obey the laws of the land (without cheating just a little), willingly accompanies his sponsor on visits to another applicant and listens and watches his technique, learns in the meantime the method of carrying the message to others.

In our humble opinion, success can be accelerated by constantly reading the "Big Book", Alcoholics Anonymous - reading it, absorbing it, following its philosophy daily in all our affairs. When you've read it through once, read it again and again. On the second and third reading you will be amazed to discover answers to questions and doubts which infiltrated your mind on the first reading.

We would also recommend reading and studying much of the literature in pamphlet form which most groups have available at their meetings. They elaborate and explain many of the principles which have possibly been enigmas to you. Couched in simple language, they cannot but help you to fortify yourself against temptation, particularly when your faith has begun to waver.

We would also insist that you go to as many meetings as you can and finally select a group which lays particular emphasis on the program and less emphasis on social activity. Fun is fun, and the alcoholic always is ready for it. All too many groups tend to emphasize fun and often make it their goal rather than that which should be - carrying the message!

▲ Step Eight Freedom

I was hesitant and puzzled when I began my Eight Step list because what about people whose feelings might be hurt or might be harmed if I admitted all—my Step Four inventory had several of those. Luckily, my sponsor informed me that Step Eight is not Step Nine, and I should not leave these activities off my list. But obviously, this did not mean that I make these harmful amends while doing Step Nine. This information may be useful in asking God for forgiveness in a later step.

My Eighth Step information came mostly from my Step Four inventory, but also my sponsor had me do a spontaneous

▲ Rule 62



writing earlier on. This included asking God over and over again to reveal where I had been selfish and dishonest—not just from regular memory, but from my deepest inner self. Spontaneous! This function brought to light many secrets I had kept from myself for many years. They needed to be written down.

I had seldom even considered the anguish my wonderful Christian parents must have felt to see their son's name in the newspaper for public intoxication year after year. Or my younger sister who, four years later, attended the same high school with my devil may care reputation still remembered by the teachers. I had never felt guilty about that loan company I had never paid back or the time when I, as a teen, tried out a motorcycle from a used lot and wrecked it. I was able to wobble it in and jumped on my bicycle and away I went.

There was a temptation to leave out certain misbehaviors because, after all, I had been sober for five whole months, and intended never to drink whisky again! I was obviously now in the category of what is called "living amends!" How my sponsor pointed out that the Big Book makes no mention of "living amends" it actually dispels that idea at the bottom of page 82 — "Ain't it grand the wind stopped blowin?"

I believe the honesty revealed in my Eighth Step list was a vital and crucial part of my recovery.

By Bob S.

▲ A Quote

FROM MY SPONSOR

"Humility is like underwear; essential, but indecent if it shows."

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For details or to add an event, call us at (216) 241-7387 or go online aacle.org/events. Deadline is the 15th of each month for next issue.