

# Playing Checkers or Playing Chess

I Got it Right the Second Time

By Rick R.

Let me preface this article by saying that I am not being critical of anybody for any reason concerning where a person is along the path of sobriety. My only motive for writing it is to give some perspective concerning the possibilities which lie ahead based on the thoroughness we applied to the understanding of the steps as we put some distance between us and that last drink. I am one of the fortunate ones that showed up at the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1969, at the age of 28 and have never wanted a drink since that day. I was the youngest person in the room for my first couple of years as the drug using population of the 60s generation had not started showing up until the mid-70s and they seemed to bottom out at a much earlier in life than the common variety alcoholic who seldom came to us until they were in their mid-40s. "midlife crisis" In my first two years, I was like everyone else when it came to the subject of thoroughness in the beginning and I was selective about what I would do with the program and about the things I would dismiss as unnecessary since I had absolutely no desire to drink. I was slow and deliberate when it came to taking the steps. It was almost two years before I attempted to do the 4th step inventory and being in the Navy at the time, I was shipped out to an oil tanker in the Tonkin gulf Yacht Club where I spent four months in and out of port hauling fuel to the fleet. I had many nights at sea thinking and longing to be back with my home group and contemplating what I had planned to do when I got home. When I did return home, I reopened my Fourth Step Inventory with a new attitude about the steps and realized that my original attempt was a very shallow scam and I burned it and started over and got it right the second time around. That, I think, was the turning point in my attitude about thoroughness. I addressed those so-called tormenting ghosts of yesterday, shared them with another trusted member of the program and it just lifted the weight off my shoulders. That I believe, made the rest of the program much easier. I have attended a weekly step study meeting ever since and it helps me to measure my growth as I cycled through the Steps and Traditions several times a year. There is a term on page 85 in the Big Book and coincidentally on page 85 in the 12&12 that suggested this is no time to rest on our laurels, and I take that very seriously because of the unexpected results I have experienced concerning the quality of life I Live Today. Steps 10, 11, and 12 are referred to as the maintenance steps. With many years of sobriety, I could rest on my laurels and vegetate, but I would have no purpose in life and if I neglected responsibilities my self-worth would suffer. Being judgmental about the behavior of others, I would be playing God and we all know that isn't right unless I am perfect myself. Scott Peck defines love as caring for and nurturing another person, and I can love everyone even if they can't return the gesture. It just means wishing the best for them. (No Exceptions). These are just a few ideas but there are many ways to continue to have a purpose and if you don't, you may want to revisit the 4th through the 9th steps and get a better perspective on how to become a more useful member of society and be fulfilled or, you may be satisfied just not drinking one day at a time. That's your choice. I heard a sportscaster describing the different head coaches of professional football teams and he said some are playing Checkers and a few are playing Chess. Life is too good to waste.