

## This Time it Will be Different.

It Gets Worse. Never Better

By Rick R.

I came from a family environment heavily laced with alcoholic drinking. I was one of ten siblings and seven out of the ten drank heavily. Both parents, uncles, and aunts that I knew spent much of their time in bars. In that environment if you did not drink you were the oddball. I started drinking at the age of 13 and by the time I was 17 years old I was drinking as heavy as any of them. In my early days in Church and in the Boy Scouts I was taught how to behave. I tried living by the principles I learned in those organizations and I was the oddball. At that young age I was calling my family out on what I now understand to be alcoholic behaviors. Their response to that was: That little S.O.B. is going to turn out to be a lawyer, and everybody got a laugh out of that. At the age of seventeen I enlisted in the U.S. Navy and discovered a disciplined environment where I could do my job well and still drink every night and on weekends and not worry about rent payments, food, and shelter. At the end of my hitch in the navy I went back to my home environment and without the discipline, I was back to my old self again. Could not hold a job for long, got into bar room brawls, got two D.U.I.'s, broken knuckles, nights in the drunk tank etc. I tried everything to stop drinking but nothing worked. I tried going on the wagon and after thirty days I would think I could go back to drinking and "This time it would be different" but it only got worse, never better. At the age of twenty-five I remembered those disciplined days in the navy and I re-enlisted. Again, I did my job very well and advanced in rate rapidly. During the next four years I was married, became a father, and was divorced and had to deal with all those issues as I was all over the Pacific during the Vietnam war. Being a Father was something that changed everything. I had become accountable, and it was something I could not simply dismiss. The divorce threw me into a turmoil and after two years of crying in my beer I woke up on Oct. 15, 1969 in desperation and called Alcoholics Anonymous, attended my first A.A. meeting and have never had, nor wanted a drink since that day. It was like walking through the mirror in the Alice in Wonderland movie. It seemed that everything I heard talked about at that meeting was 180% opposite to my past thinking. I immediately began adopting new habits on every issue in my life starting with my responsibilities to my first wife and my son making sure that she understood that she was right to leave me and if that had not have happened, I may not be alive today. Having gone 180% about family matters, my current wife and I have just celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I got it right the second time around as a byproduct of practicing A.A. principals at their deepest levels. I finished my 20-year career in the Navy. I am no longer embarrassed about the things I did while under the influence of alcoholic thinking. I became accountable and have made restitution for those actions and deeds many times over and as I live my life on the unselfish side of the ledger, I have nothing to be ashamed of and I live a life of contentment. "Happiness is a byproduct of a life well lived and not an end in itself". (Eleanor Roosevelt)