

# The Road to Happiness

In All Our Affairs

By Rick R.

Every time I see a new face come through the doors of AA; I focus my attention on him/her to see if they have been here before. If they are new, I show them where the coffee pot is and make sure that they get the friendly attention they need to feel at home. I know that, if it is their first time, they are exploring new territory and are most likely, troubled to the extreme. They have a drinking problem, and they may not know it yet, but what is worse is, their thinking is anything but normal. If they are lucky, they stick around long enough to establish some new friendships and get away from the bottle long enough to recognize that there is much more to the program simply than not drinking.

Next, if things go right for them, someone suggests that they start to find some sort of service work to do, and that is embarrassing, but they force themselves to do it anyway. This is so out of character for them, and they do not realize that it is the core of the behavior that will save their life, but it is only a beginning. Next, they are introduced to a set of Principles, and Twelve Steps that will ultimately be the solution to all that faulty thinking that they brought with them. Nobody is perfect in this venture, but we get better day by day and, at our own pace as we practice these principles, as best we can, among our friends in the room. This process gets easier as we get more comfortable with our new friends, but it is not so easy to take it outside and apply it in all our affairs. Some-times, when a single alcoholic enters the program and has no one to answer to he can still hang on to some attitudes that are EGO driven and be satisfied with not drinking but when he is married with children, will reign in those behaviors, and become a role-model and a husband and father.

This process is like going to a blacksmith for a shoe for your horse. He goes to his anvil and fashions a shoe that fits perfectly on the horse's hoof and the horse can run around in the soft soil in the corral just fine, but how does it perform out on the trail? We learn how to act in the rooms, we learn how to care for others, we learn how to show compassion for the suffering alcoholic, and we learn that we begin to feel good about ourselves. We learn to grow up. We begin to understand that the goal is more than just not drinking and serving coffee in the meetings.

By this time, it is obvious that we must carry these lessons outside of the rooms and extend what we learned into every area of our lives. We become better mothers/ fathers/sons/daughters/workers/and friends. That is what normal people do. The joy I see in the eyes of a parent, who is just learning to interact with their children, is an experience I never want to miss. The playground replaces the barroom, and the joy replaces the drink.

There is an opening prayer in AA in some areas that states that: **the results will be freedom, growth, and happiness.** We will never experience this if we keep the horse in the corral. My role in all of this is to walk with them and be prepared to answer their questions, based on what I have learned, and being sure that my motives are honest, consistent with the steps and traditions of AA and in the best interest of that person.