

Anonymity: The Spiritual Foundation

We Failed Idealists Need Attention

By Rick R.

I came from a family that was riddled with alcoholic drinkers and many of them had the problem as bad as I did. I recall the first month, or so, when I got sober, still hanging out with them at our favorite watering hole, drinking ginger ale. I would slip out every night at 8:00pm and go to the AA meeting at 8:30 pm and return at 10:30 pm without telling anyone where I was going. I didn't want anybody to know that I was checking out the AA program. I didn't want to face the ridicule at the time, and I wasn't sure it was going to work for me. If it didn't work, I wouldn't have put up with their mocking me. You might say that I was protecting my anonymity at the time and didn't even know it. After thirty days of that, I didn't care who knew about it because I believed I had found the answer, and I did. Soon after that I was one of those guys that wanted to shout it from the rooftops and try to sober up everyone around me and you know how that turned out. As I dragged each or my five brothers to AA meetings, it seems that they each learned just enough to be able to rationalize exactly why they were not alcoholics, and they ridiculed me anyway. Since then, one brother, a nephew, and a niece have committed suicide. That was among the experiences that gave me hard earned lessons on the respect for the principle of anonymity. Of the rest of my immediate family of ten siblings, only one sister saw something in me that she liked, and she got sober in the program and hasn't had a drink in over forty-eight years. We are exposed to the discussions in AA meeting as the newer members complain about someone breaking their anonymity, or the ones that want to shout it from the rooftops, like my former self, and that will always be the case in AA as *that* is one of the symptoms of alcoholism. We are failed idealists that need attention, but as we get more experience, we learn the true value of the spirit of anonymity. We can always come up with some noble reason for tooting our own horn and we can dress it up in the altruistic motive of sacrificing one's own anonymity to save someone's life and that, sometimes, in the long run, destroys the chance of being a good example and often turns out doing just the opposite, and I have personally witnessed that. In Tradition Twelve it talks of Anonymity as "The spiritual foundation of all our Tradition ever reminding us to place principles before personalities". There is a difference in the "Spirit of the law", and the "Letter of the law". We who have been diligent with the program have been highly influenced by the Spirit of what the founders learned and introduced us to in the form of the 12 steps and the 12 traditions, and they all come in the form of unselfishness of the spirit. I have yet to find one prayer or principle in the two books that we use as reference guides, that are of a *material nature or of selfish motives*. This tells me that the things I do, that are as the result of practicing the principles of the program, should be done unselfishly and *without fanfare*. So long as I needed the attention that I was always seeking when I was looking for the photo opp., I was still only following the letter of the law, so to speak. When I came to understand the Spirit of Anonymity, I was able to rein in my EGO and my selfish motives. I try to be a good role model and do it quietly. It seems to work better that way.