

# The Gate to Freedom

An Unexpected Result

By Rick R.

The Twelve Steps are placed in order, for a reason. Anyone that comes into the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) program for the first time can understand that step one is about admitting that we have a problem with alcohol that we were unable to correct using our own resources alone. That is not too hard to understand but as we address the rest of the step, they start to get onto territories that we have little understanding of. I bought right into the first step with no reservations at all, but I had my doubts about all the rest of the steps and just how thoroughly I planned to embrace them. Steps two and three were not threatening to me but steps four and five is where I hit the wall. The thought of writing an inventory then *talking to someone else about it was the first major fear* for me but I did it.

Being in the Navy at the time, I flew out to the Tonkin Gulf where I spent the next four months without a meeting. When I returned home, I opened my original inventory folder and read what I had written and realized that it was a very shallow and worthless rambling of nothingness. I burned it and started over. This time I did a thorough job of it and *the minute I finished it; I knew exactly who I would do my 5th step with*. That very thorough 5<sup>th</sup> step was the *cornerstone* of the rest of my program.

Up until that time, I did not understand the objective of the inventory and admitting it to another person. Today as I look back on it, I realize that, from that day on it had an unexpected effect on me that I did not recognize at the time. It occurred to me that my mind had been relieved of the rethinking of many of the things that I was not proud of in the past. Things that used to keep me awake at night. It did not relieve me of all that mental turmoil but, at the time I thought that it had great promise.

Practicing the following step started me learning how to change my habits and to not make most of the mistakes of the past, but my mind still was not at peace. It really came to me as I put the 9th step into action and finally started putting those dark memories to rest. Until I understood that everyone has their share of regrettable memories and that nobody is perfect, I thought that I was the worst. In time I came to realize that I had addressed all my problems as an alcoholic and have, for the most part, corrected them. I had changed my old habits and considered myself a good citizen and no longer did the things that I would regret or be ashamed of.

The next thing that I did, that brought everything full circle, was to deal with the wreckage of the past. Making amends seemed like a punishment to me, at first, as did the 5th step, but it brought each of those issues to a *natural conclusion*, and I no longer had to anticipate how those things were going to turn out. You might say that it *neutralized* every one of my fears concerning the past and I am *free of all that mental turmoil that plagued me for all those years*. I did not understand all of this until after I had done step five and followed it later with step nine and it came to me that those two steps were the gates to the peace of mind that I enjoy today and *the freedom from the pain of yesterday*. If you identify with this, I encourage you to revisit those two steps and take the risk. You only live once, and it would be a shame to miss the opportunity to find that *serenity and peace of mind*.