

# The Persons We Have Harmed

It's Time to Pay the Piper

By Rick R.

How many of us show up at the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A) ready to start exploring our past and all the issues that we have had with our fellow man? Not me! I came here with a rationalizing, alcoholic mind, and the last thing I intended to do was to go searching for more things to hate about myself. The alcoholic within me was pointing the finger at them to minimize the appearance that I was at fault. My mind was constantly spinning yarns to have the right answers ready should anyone question why I did the things I did. In all my waking hours, I got no peace of mind unless I had something to drink in me, and when that happened, it diminished the need to care about other people and, in fact, it immediately turned into drunken arrogance and often into verbal and physical confrontations. A life lived by those standards can only end in destruction and when we have the option to drink it away, we can put it off indefinitely, but eventually we will have to pay the piper.

Not everyone can repair all the damage they have done in the past, to our families and friends, and that is simply because some of them have moved on and may not be concerned about what our plans are, and they do not see the need to be involved in the drama that the alcoholic is going through, especially with their memory of the failed *good intentions* of the past. Until we have a history of changing our way of life and putting some time between us and that snapshot of our last drunken debacle, we cannot expect any recognition from them since they are not following us around every day recording our progress.

When it comes to making a list of all the persons we have harmed, the first thought that came to my mind was, how far do I go with this list. My thought on that is; what amount of peace of mind would I be satisfied with? The most obvious people are the ones that are closest to us such as family, friends, employers, and as I list those, I can spiral outward to the more remote people like relatives, friends from the past, and so on.

The last thing I hear questioned is who I owe amends to and again, the peace of mind issue sets the standard for who goes on the list. First off, if I have completely changed those old behaviors and have put them behind me, I have already mended my ways and all that is left to do is to acknowledge my past mistakes in the presence of the person receiving the amend. I find it easy to level the playing field by simply asking the question: "Have you ever done something that you really regretted?" The answer usually goes: "Of course, who hasn't?" Next, I say, "Can we talk?" You have just leveled the playing field. You can do this with anyone that you feel uncomfortable about, when you hear their name mentioned, and eventually you will run out of people that are constantly renting room in your brain. In the rare occasion when a person responds to your effort to make things right, in a negative way, they may have issues of their own that we are not aware of, you have done all you can, and you can put it behind you. All that free space in your head adds up to *peace of mind* and you have the rest of your life to complete it.