

A Fearless and Thorough Moral Inventory

It Brought Issues to a Natural Conclusion

By Rick R.

The 12 steps are arranged in order, for a reason. Anyone that comes into the program for the first time can understand that step 1 is about admitting that we have a problem with alcohol that we were unable to correct using our own resources alone. That's 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 2 and 3 were not threatening to me but steps 4 and 5 was 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. At about 12 months sober I made a half-hearted attempt at doing an inventory but, being in the Navy at the time, I was ordered to fly out to the Far East, to a ship in the Tonkin Gulf where I spent the next 4 months without a meeting and contemplating My Future and 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 and honest job of it and *the minute I finished it, I knew exactly who I would do my 5th step with*. A very thorough 5th step, I believe, was the *cornerstone* of the rest of my program. Up until that time I didn't understand the objective of the inventory and admitted 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 didn't even recognize at the time. It occurred to me that my mind had been relieved of the rethinking of many of the shameful things I did in the past. Things that used to keep me awake at night. It didn't 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 (Making Amends) into action and finally started putting those dark memories to rest. Until I understood that everyone had their share of regrettable memories and that nobody's perfect, I thought that I was the worst and over a period, 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. How many people can say that? 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 didn't understand all of this until after I had done step 5 and followed it later with step 9 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*.