

# **RECOVERY & ME**

## **How Do You Become an Old-timer?**

**- Anonymous**

When I was around twelve years old I wanted to learn how to play the guitar. Every week I went to guitar lessons, sat with my instructor for about thirty minutes, went home and never practiced. The end result; I never learned how to play the guitar. This error in judgment was an invaluable lesson; I discovered that there is a powerful correlation between investment and return. If all I ever did was show up, listened to those who understood and successfully applied the principles of recovery into their lives, and then did nothing to actively and properly apply these principles in my own life I am convinced that the results would have been very much like those of my guitar playing days.

There are many paths to successful recovery. I found my path in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Over the years I've heard it said the answer to the age-old question; "How does one become an AA old-timer?, is to "don't drink and don't die". The first time that I heard this statement I thought it was quite clever. It is accurate to say that to become an old-timer avoiding taking that first drink and not dying would suffice. However, it has been my experience that there is a lot more to enjoying the rewards of recovery are much more than just don't drink and just don't die. On September 11, 1977, I took my last drink of alcohol and my journey into the ranks of "AA Old-timer" began. It has been the anything but dull and uneventful and it has been a lot more than "don't drink and don't die". I made a decision a long time ago that I wanted what the AA program had to offer. I wanted to be sober as well as to enjoy that AA promise of a "happy, joyous and free" life. Like most alcoholics early in recovery I wanted these things (ASAP), however I didn't fully understand what was involved in attaining them. There was going to be work (what an ugly four letter word) that would have to be done to reach my goal.

So, what initial action was going to be needed to move towards this goal? First, I had to accept the fact that my philosophy on life and plan of living was a *tad askew*. Introspective reflection and the examination of my life up to my arrival at rehab left to only one conclusion; "I was one messed-up dude". My addiction to alcohol had produced an extremely limited and distorted perspective of life. So, it was time to change. What did

I have to change; pretty much everything. I had to dispel the idea that I was the “Alpha and Omega”. I had to look at my need to right my passed wrongs and continue daily to examine my behavior and readily admit my faults. I also had to (now hold on to your hats all of you under the age of 30 years) come to the realization that as an individual I was not, never have been and never will be: **“THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE”**. You see, I’m just not that important as an individual; however as a member of a larger whole; just like everyone else in this world; **“I AM SPECIAL”**. I am; as we all are; brothers and sisters , no greater or lesser than anyone else in this world, **“PRECIOUS CHILDREN OF GOD”**. The acceptance of this fact , that we all are special only as a member of a larger universal community, was one of the foundational building blocks that started me on the path to becoming an old-timer. Stick around AA long enough and you too will come to understand, believe and accept what makes you truly unique. Through this understanding, with proper instructions and with much repeated practice, you too can enjoy the promise of becoming an old-timer and living a life that is **“HAPPY JOYOUS AND FREE”**.

P.S. About five years ago, I bought a guitar, got some lessons, and today I can actually (not well) play the guitar.