

June 1979

*The Big Book
opened his eyes
to*

The Light of Reason

AS FAR BACK as I could remember, I could never be myself. I didn't know who I really was: My family roots are African, Cherokee Indian, German, and Irish. My first attempts at Steps Four and Five in AA let me begin to let go of deep-seated resentments; I had been filled with fear, anger, and pride about my family and society.

I was a mailman for thirty-seven years, and I lost the mail truck twice when I was drunk. I was in the Navy, and I couldn't find my way back to the ship; I was winning the war drunk. I ended up in a flophouse room. I had lost my wife, my self-respect, and everything except my job. I had been sent to my bottom by King Alcohol and my racial resentments, and it was there that my friend R. H. found me. He was a drinking buddy of long standing, but he'd been sober for three months in AA, and he brought me a copy of the Big Book. I thumbed through the book as I sipped my booze that day, and in my stupor I read, on page



570, the quote from Herbert Spencer: "There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance — that principle is contempt prior to investigation."

The last phrase opened my eyes. At the end of the week, I called my friend and asked him to take me to an AA meeting. I had not had a drink since the day he brought me the Big Book, and I haven't had one — yet! — in the eight and a half years since. I went to my first meeting arrogant and egotistical and full

of hate, a know-it-all.

At my third meeting, I was told in no uncertain terms to shut up, sit down, and listen. I soon learned that they were helping me to "discover a chink in the walls. . . ego has built, through which the light of reason can shine" ("Twelve and Twelve," page 46).

I loved the Big Book, and slowly, in the book study meetings and at home, the pages began to really shine through and mean my life to me. In my hazy mind, the pages that caught my attention especially were those parts concerning race. I saw on page 17, "We are people who normally would not mix. . . . The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution . . . upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action." And I saw on page 28, "If what we have learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color, are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try." I began to feel like a member of the human race.

In the first year of sobriety, I retired from the postal service and was reunited with my wife, from whom I had been separated for eight years. It's better now than it ever has been in all the thirty-five years we have been married.

I had learned to drop the word

blame from my speech, but I was only giving lip service to the idea. I was hiding my real feelings and still living in a fantasy world, being Sidney Poitier one day and Iron Eyes Cody the next. I did not drink, but it was a tooth-grinding, white-knuckle sobriety. I thank God for those AAs who saw what I was doing. Two men in my group told me to start and finish the Fourth and Fifth Steps and get down to causes and conditions right away!

I began to really study the fifth chapter of the Big Book and to follow directions. The arch of triumph was beginning to be built through which I would pass to freedom. That was five and a half years ago. I no longer have the obsession to drink, not because of any goodness or virtue on my part, but because I have used the tools passed down to me from Bill W. and Dr. Bob. I use the Tenth Step daily, and take the suggestion from my sponsor to study the Big Book and all AA literature. AA principles have taught me to accept myself and to look for changes in attitudes that I must make. AA has taught me that I no longer need to hold on to resentments at those people who called me half-breed. I believe this firmly and with conviction, because I no longer doubt the Fellowship and the miracle of AA. It works — as long as I stay in action, trying to give away what was so freely given to me. And for that I am grateful.

F.C. Hawthorne, Calif.