The Day the Lights Came on

From a State of Spiritual Darkness

By Rick R.

Pryor to my AA experience, like most practicing alcoholics, I spent years trying to navigate my way through the rough waters of alcoholism thinking that, someday, everything would come together, and I would settle into a life that was normal, but we all know how absurd that delusion is for an undiagnosed alcoholic. I started drinking in my early teens and never drank moderately. I always drank for oblivion from the start, and to cover up emotional damage done as the result of my unsupervised, misguided, undisciplined behavior. I do not attribute that to anybody's mistreatment of me, but more to my inability to see myself as an equal to those around me. I was the smallest kid in the presence of my peers, and I found myself trying to get my share of attention, so I often overcompensated to make up for my low self-esteem. I developed habits of dishonesty to make up for my short falls, and that led to a pattern of life that we in AA are familiar with. At the age of twenty-eight, I became *desperate enough to swallow my pride* and call AA for help as nothing I was doing seemed to be working and at that point, my desperation *outweighed my denial*. I showed up before a meeting, and three people were there to greet me, and within two minutes, THE LIGHTS CAME ON, in my head and I have never wanted a drink since that day. At the time, I had not realized it, and I was vigilant for a long time, but the obsession was gone from that very first day. I made a 180% turn in my thinking consistent with the Steps and Principles of the program. The answers to all my self-esteem issues were there and all I had to do was to seek them out as I saw others dealing with those same problems and getting positive results. I After 54 years of attending meetings and watching thousands of people coming and going in the program, with various reasons for being there, and like snowflakes, no two are exactly alike, I can almost tell when he/she comes to that point when THE LIGHTS COME ON. Seeing that happen, sometimes after years of struggle, is a touching experience. In my early days I did not recognize it so much as I was mentally busy trying to figure out my own solutions, but as I have settled into a life that is peaceful, I recognize it often and it is a moving experience. If anyone has ever watched the movie about Helen Keller entitled, **The Miracle Worker**, a true story about a girl who, shortly after birth, contracted a disease that rendered her Blind and Deaf. She woke up each day in total *silence and darkness*. Imagine how that would be. In desperation, they brought in a teacher, Anne Sullivan, to help them with this unbearable state of hopelessness. Anne started teaching her tactile sign language, and at some point, after much frustration, Hellen learned her first word, WATER, in the scene at the water pump. To this day, it is the most touching scene I have ever watched. It is like the Lights came on in her head and it opened the world of communication for the first time in her life. That is the way I feel when I see someone in the program crosses over that line of denial and make that 180% turn. Whenever anybody comes to the AA program in *the state of spiritual darkness*, I hope that someone will always be there to help them find the light switch.