

## • Grapevine Online Exclusive

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### Change of Perception

His first AA meeting was his spiritual awakening



Several years before I came to AA, I was aware that there was something very wrong with me but not one person ever suggested that I might be an alcoholic or that I should try AA. Perhaps that was due to the denial of those around me that drank like I did. Suggesting that I had a problem with alcohol would mean outing themselves and others. Looking back on it now, I feel fortunate that I survived those last few years of failed attempts at life and when I ran out of options, I came to AA sincerely looking for answers.

The denial within me was gone. My mind was open and for the first time in my life I was desperate, and I was listening. At my first A.A. meeting I was moved by what I heard. It was different than anything I had experienced before. The people were being honest and candid about things that only brought shame and guilt to me in the past. I felt safe for the first time in my life and could discuss those things openly, that had been taboo up until then. Prior to that, everything in my life was a façade. At that moment On October 15, 1969, my PERCEPTION of the world had changed, and I have not wanted a drink since.

Call it a Spiritual Awakening if you like, and it was for me, but it came in the form of a

*Profound Change in Perception.* In appendices 2, in the Big Book, it describes a man who had “*undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life*”. I began to question all the decisions I had made in the past, and how the residue of those decisions had tarnished and eroded any chance of a successful, happy life. I became aware that the *values system* that I had learned as a child, at church and at the Boy Scout meetings, etc. was lost in the dust, and was *replaced with guilt and shame*. I was in trouble when I violated *my own value system*. I now realize that I wasn't a bad kid but I was a kid that wasn't strong enough to do the things I knew to be right. The more I broke the rules, the easier it became, and *moral standards were meaningless*. Soon drinking was the only thing that eases my conscience. When that quit working for me, I found myself at the door of A.A.

Once I had that *change of perception*, I knew what to do. It may be as simple as “trying to stop doing the things that I regret” but the key to it all is “Being Honest with myself”, and never going back to my old way of thinking.

I said that I was fortunate to have survived those last few years of drinking and that I came to A.A. looking for answers. Being desperate enough to ask for help was the most important part of that experience. I don't believe that anyone could have convinced me to stop drinking against my will. I may have stayed dry long enough to get the heat off, but I doubt that I would have *sincerely surrendered to the degree necessary to have that CHANGE OF PERCEPTION and therefore no SPIRITUAL AWAKENING*. Getting off in the right direction from the start was very important to any success I've had in A.A. I know that I only live once and *I don't want to waste the life God gave me*. Today, I practice the things I've learned in A.A. and it's everything that they promised it would be.

RICK R.