

## Guideposts to Sobriety

I HEARD a speaker say, "The Big Book shows us the way to sobriety; just follow the guideposts." Since then, I have read and reread the Big Book, chapter after chapter, searching and underlining the guideposts I should follow. Don't laugh when I tell you that most of my book is now underlined!

Whenever part of Chapter 5 is read at a meeting, especially the words "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path," I know that the path they are referring to is in the Big Book, and along that path are guideposts showing us the way to comfortable sobriety.

Page 29 tells us that "clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered." True, "The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking," but for me it's not enough to just go to meetings, get up, and go home.

Action is one of the guideposts that I follow for my comfortable sobriety. On page 14, in "Bill's Story," it is said to be "imperative to work with others." On page 15: "If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die." Then, in case

you missed that guidepost, on page 89: "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics."

The action I took was involvement in hospital and institution work. I helped carry the message of AA to those who were confined, and the rewards were innumerable. I found out that in order to keep sobriety, you must give it away.

I love reading what AA promises us on pages 83-84. Many of these promises are coming true for me daily, because I've found the guidepost to follow. It's in the last paragraph on this subject: "They will always materialize if we work for them."

The Steps have been fairly easy for me. I had no argument with any of them — but I have to keep using the guideposts. For example, I thought I was taking the Fifth Step every time I chaired a meeting, until a guidepost on page 72 stopped me in my tracks and headed me in the right direction: "If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to

avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably they got drunk."

They were talking about me! I had been holding back a lot, because I couldn't reveal certain things in front of a group of people. Thank God, I didn't take a drink!

Well, this month, after four years and eleven months of sobriety in AA, I finally took the Fifth Step as it should be taken: with God and another human being. Totally and honestly, I unloaded all the garbage I had been holding back, and what a relief after I finished the two-hour session! I smiled all the way home, as though a big load had been removed from my shoulders. The book tells me on page 75 that after taking the Fifth Step, we begin to have a spiritual experience. Wow!

When I celebrated my second AA birthday, an older member told me, "It gets better and better; you ain't seen nothin' yet!" You know, he was right!

I know now that the real benefits come when I follow the AA path, and I'm going to continue looking for more guideposts. I know they're in the Big Book somewhere.

Being an alcoholic, I want everything now, but I must be patient. On page 164: "God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.... The answers will come, if your own house is in order."

I'm grateful that I have found so much in the AA program. For me, it's not enough just to go to meetings, get up, and go home.

Maybe some of you will find a few guideposts that I missed.

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