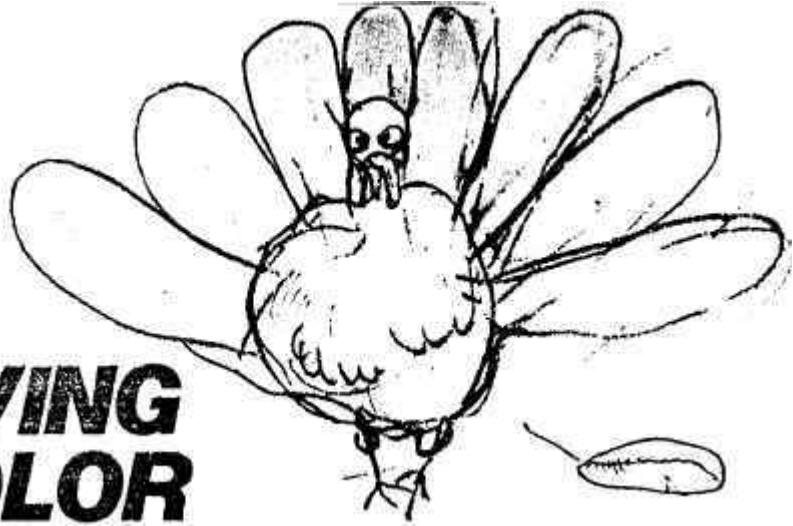


April 1990

IN LIVING COLOR



Six years ago, when I came to AA, my sponsor told me to read the Big Book. She made it fun, because she is a fun lady.

She said, "When you prepare to read the Big Book, have a lot of different colored pencils handy.

"Each time you read it, take one colored pencil, and underline the sentences in the book that pop out at you. The next time you read it, take another colored pencil and underline everything you can relate to. And so on, using a different colored pencil each time you read it."

Well, the first time I read the Big Book, nothing popped out at me. I thought the book was beneath my intellectual level and the stories in the back were shocking. So I didn't underline anything. I hated the book because it seemed to imply that something was wrong with "perfect" me.

I also despised AA meetings but was taken to them nonetheless. I was in denial. But it was too late for me to

carry on as I had been. You see, the meetings and the reading of the book had spoiled my drinking.

The second time I read the Big Book, I was able to underline four sentences in blue pencil.

The third time I read it, I was able to underline two more statements.

That made six things in the Big Book I agreed with. I was ecstatic. I went to an AA meeting that night and for the first time in my life, I did something positive to help someone else. I carried the message to my fellow suffering alcoholics — those six things. I was so proud of myself, and I had only forty days of sobriety.

The fourth time I read the Big Book, two more things popped out at me which I underlined in orange.

Now, six years later, almost everything in my Big Book is underlined, and my book has long since fallen apart from much use. (I recently bought a new one.)

Mary J., Goleta, Calif.