

DRIVING WITH THE HEADLIGHTS ON

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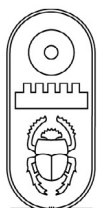
My Rosicrucian journey began with my father. He joined the Order in the 1960s, after more than a decade of searching for something that would help him understand life. He had come back from serving in the Pacific during World War II to construct a life for himself and the family he started soon after. However, he found himself seemingly thwarted at every point, hemmed in by racial prejudice, both legally sanctioned and through social norms, as he strove to use his talents commercially, as well as to build a business. Added to this, after a decade of marriage and with three young children, he saw his marriage begin to fall apart, while finding no satisfactory answers from the clergy he turned to.

Nonetheless, near the point of despair, he held fast to the thought that there must be some source of answers to the seeming riddle of life. Two events helped to fuel this internal surety. One was a near-death episode as a very young child that included an oft-reported tunnel-of-light experience. The other occurred during WWII. While alone, he encountered the site of a fresh battle that had left dozens of dead enemy troops scattered on a field before him. In dismay as he confronted this sight, he heard a voice that declared that there was no death, despite the lifeless and still warm bodies that were strewn before him.

In his darkest moments, he continued to search for an answer. Along the way, he investigated Freemasonry, autosuggestion, and Rosicrucianism. However, a parish priest told him that membership in the Rosicrucian Order was forbidden by Church doctrine. As a faithful Catholic, instead of joining, he encouraged his brother-in-law to join, who later declared that he didn't think it was worthwhile.

Fortunately, several years later, a work acquaintance to whom he had offered a ride home suggested that he read about the life of Edgar Cayce. In a book, Edgar Cayce was cited as saying that the Rosicrucian Order remained a source of inner teachings. At that point, having thrown off the strictures of his religious upbringing, he joined AMORC. Soon after, my own journey toward the Rosicrucian Order began.

Having not lived with him since around the age of four, my relationship with my father was strained. There was little trust between us. However, in my bi-weekly visits as a young teen, he began to share with me ideas that he had encountered through his Rosicrucian studies. Although by this time, I had rejected much of the dogma imparted during my parochial school education, many of the ideas he put forward seemed very foreign to the framework that I had internalized about the Divine, the purpose of life, the afterlife, and my place as a human being. Nonetheless, over the course of countless multi-hour debates, some of the new ideas began to take root. While as a pre-teen I had rejected the concept of hell as unjust and absurd, the concept of reincarnation felt totally alien to me. I recall rather vividly my debate with my father about reincarnation on a Sunday evening before heading back home to New York City. His arguments hadn't convinced me. Then, on Monday, back in my home setting, it hit me. Reincarnation felt totally sensible and natural. Similarly, the idea of the impersonality of Cosmic Laws was hard to meld with my then-heavily anthropomorphic concept of the Divine. But ultimately, the logic of Cosmic Laws and their proposed similarity to the operation of the laws of the physical



observable world opened my mind to entertaining the concept. My father's analogy for the origin of the travails of everyday life made sense to me: He described it like individuals driving around at night with no headlights; they would be prone to bumping into things and straying off the road. Conversely, learning and governing one's behavior in accord with the Universal Cosmic Laws would make one's life smoother and more satisfying.

Spliced into our bi-weekly conversations, my father began to share articles from the *Rosicrucian Digest* with me. I generally found them thoughtful and quite interesting. My father also recommended that I read the biography of Edgar Cayce: *The Sleeping Prophet*. After finishing the book, I was ready to join AMORC's Junior Order of Torchbearers, which was open to individuals under age eighteen who were family members of Rosicrucian students. I participated for about a year, reading the lessons that I received through the mail. While I found the lessons enjoyable, I didn't find them as thought-provoking as the *Digest* articles or my discussions with my father. I let my membership lapse, anticipating that when I reached age eighteen I would join the adult membership of the Order.

While I didn't join the Order at the time of my eighteenth birthday, I had begun reading about parapsychology, psychic phenomena, and mysticism, including many books based on Edgar Cayce's life. By now, my visits with my father had become a regular part of my life, no longer court-mandated. He continued to promote the benefits of joining the Order and studying the Rosicrucian teachings. Oftentimes in our conversations, he would speak with almost childlike fervor about something he had encountered in his Rosicrucian studies. Nevertheless, I still wasn't convinced that the Rosicrucian

Order was for me. However, one thought that continually pushed me in the direction of the Order was my father's enthusiasm for it. I knew him to be a highly rational and intelligent person and sought out by many for his counsel. The obvious question for me was, "Why would he somehow be a fool in his assessment of the Order's value?" That question hung in the air for me as I approached my own journey with AMORC.

Like many college students in the United States in the early 1970s, a significant part of my activity included experimenting with various drugs, appreciating the altered states that they induced. I recounted many of these experiences to my father, especially those involving hallucinogens. One of my father's comments to me about my experiences changed my direction. His words were: "You're going on an unguided trip; and I'm going on a guided one." From my experiences with various drugs, the salience of the difference stood out to me. I was moving closer to joining the Order. Then one night, at the conclusion of a late evening visit to my father accompanied by a close friend who shared an interest in parapsychology and mysticism, my father demonstrated a Rosicrucian principle involving the mind's influence on matter. The demonstration was utterly convincing. I sent off my membership application the next day.

Since that day, my four-decade journey with the Rosicrucian Order has been a continually unfolding revelation. All that my father told me I came to realize for myself as true. There is an underlying order in the experiences of humankind and Cosmic Laws govern our existence. Those Laws point us towards the realization of the Oneness of All Things. And, on the everyday level, driving with one's headlights on makes life's journey so much more harmonious and rewarding.