

BETTER TIMES



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All that is required to form a group is a resentment and a coffee pot.

See story, right...



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THE HILL GROUP – 55 YEARS

On January 14, 1943, the first AA meeting in Toronto was held at the Little Denmark Restaurant by two ministers and six alcoholics. This became a regular meeting and the group grew...

Colonel Goodwin G. joined AA in October 1946. A friend of his, Tom G., formed the *Kingsway Group* that year. Many people from North Toronto traveled each Wednesday to the new group. But the Colonel tired of traveling out to Kingsway, so he founded the *Hill Group*. The first meeting was held on Thursday, October 15, 1948, at Timothy Eaton Church. The Colonel talked most of the *Kingsway* members into joining the *Hill Group*.

“He was very persuasive,” says Joe C., who is 57 years sober. “Starting the *Hill Group* shut down the *Kingsway Group* for one or two meetings. Some people were deeply offended.” Even resentment has a place in AA, as the saying goes. All that is required to form a group is a resentment and a coffee pot. So

the Colonel’s resentment about traveling out to the *Kingsway Group* helped AA to grow. By 1949, some 18 groups were meeting regularly in Toronto.

Ten people attended the first *Hill Group* meeting – six alcoholics and four wives. Goodwin was a big advocate of spouses being involved in the group. The



group grew and by 1957 more than a hundred people were regularly attending meetings.

The *Hill Group* became known as the “Mink & Pearls” group because it was frequented by Forest Hill residents. Coffee was served in china cups with saucers. “It was a very classy

group,” remembers Rene D., who is 46 years sober. “It was one of the largest groups in Toronto, and if you got to speak there you had hit the big time.”

Some time around 1965 the *Hill’s* discussion group was begun on Monday nights at the Church of the Transfiguration on Manor Road. (Yonge and Eglinton area) and the *Hill* continues to evolve and be committed to service. The group now has signers for the hard of hearing at the Thursday night open meetings and in 2003 two deaf members received their one-year medallion.

Approximately 200 people regularly attend the Thursday meeting. The group organizes service meetings in the Toronto area, and is committed to financial support of Intergroup. The 55-year Anniversary Celebration, on October 30, is open to all members of AA, families, friends and supporters. The Thursday night meeting starts at 8:30 p.m.

Jim H. (a Hill member)

BILL J. turns 50

arms, he’ll tell you he can’t remember. Sounds like an alcoholic to me.

Returning from active duty, Bill rejoined Eaton’s. He remembers several instances of hidden bottles in the storeroom, long lunches, late lunches, and of course ‘never coming back’ lunches. Bill has belonged to two groups during his 50 years; 23 years with the *Danforth Group* and the last 27 with the *Bayview Group*.

Over the years, Bill has developed a long list of AA members’ telephone numbers and he is always calling his AA friends to find out how they are doing and where they are in their lives. His only concern is that an increasing number of people on his list have passed away over the years.

Bill is an absolute delight to be around. He is always cheerful, positive, and ready to share his sobriety with everyone around him. The core of his message is always about maintaining balance between home, work and AA. He comes from an era when members dressed up to go to meetings. He hasn’t forgotten this and people always comment on how dapper he looks. Others remark on his “movie star” good looks, which seem to improve with age.

Please join the members of the *Bayview Group* in helping Bill celebrate 50 years of sobriety at 8 p.m., Sunday, November 2, 2003, at the Willowdale Christian School (600 Hilda Street, one block west of Yonge just north of Drewry).

Barry W.

Hallowe’en is a time when ghosts, goblins and spirits roam the earth. Among this spooky there must be a spirit of sobriety because it attached itself to Bill J. of the *Bayview Group* on October 31, 1953, and hasn’t let go since. Bill could have had 51 years of sobriety by now but after 8 months in the program he decided to go out and do some more research.

Bill started drinking at the ripe young age of 16: about the time he began working with the former Eaton’s company. But he says he really learned how to drink in the Canadian Navy, which he joined two years later. I’ve heard him mention a drunken train trip to Halifax to join his ship and having done a tour or two in the brig. If you ask him where he got the tattoos on his

The Editors Say...

REHEARSING FAILURE

I remember sitting alone with my liquid courage, hoping to come up with a plan. Often my plans were complicated, but I really believed that another drink would give me more courage, sympathy, and relief.

Sometimes, I would follow through with my plans. Some worked, some didn't. But every time the plan failed, I had my liquid relief. I would say to myself, "See, you tried the right approach and it didn't work." Pretty soon, I started to expect things to go wrong – all the time.

My disease creates failure. It wants me to believe that no matter how hard I try, and how many times I do the right things, I will fail.

There were times when I should have been happy with the results that came my way. But there always was a cloud over my achievements. I would think that I was just lucky. I did not allow myself success, because I became familiar and accepting of failure. When people were happy for me, and told me so, I would feel that I did not deserve their well wishes. I was more comfortable hearing criticism because I knew that would be a reason for hurt, anger, and resentment.

I actually reached the stage where I would try to make things

go wrong. That would give me a reason to drink. I now know that my previous attempts to succeed at a number of things were set up by me to fail – even before I started.

In the program I have come to learn a different way. I do not expect failure. I attend meetings and I see success all around me. I do not hear the language of doubt. I learn to do the things that do not set me up for failure. I think differently. And the promises do come true.

So, once I started working the steps to the best of my abili-

ty, and attempted to practice the principles in all my affairs, failure started to fade away. I didn't trap myself in negative, self-destructive thoughts. One day at a time, I was granted a reprieve from failure.

Today I know that if I drink, I am rehearsing failure. If I don't work the steps, I am rehearsing failure. And, most of all – if I don't pray for help and thank God for His Grace – I have set myself up for the biggest failure of all.

That is why for me, gratitude for each day of sobriety, one day at a time is the beginning of the end of rehearsing failure.

Dennis O.

The Tenth Step

"Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

This is the step where the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous gives me direction on how to meet the challenges of daily living in sobriety, one day at a time. In early sobriety the changes in attitude and outlook were so radically different from my old life I was afraid that they wouldn't stick! I've since been able to relax and realize that gaining emotional maturity is an ongoing process. There's always going to be room for improvement.

I was never much in the habit of self-appraisal before I came into AA. I lived my life in a constant alcoholic fog, just had another drink and pretended everything was fine. So realizing that I have a problem, and looking at exactly what the problem is inside me, is actually progress. Someone told me that alcohol blocked my emotional growth. I was starting out with the emotional maturity that I had when I discovered drinking as a teenager. My immediate reac-

tions are often self-centered, childish, and undisciplined. Continuing to look at how I am handling situations in my life day by day keeps me in the present and hopefully leads to some improvements.

need to slow down, discuss the situation with my sponsor or other trusted friend, wait until my emotions have cooled off before I rush to confront someone.

The second half of this step, 'and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it', acknowledges that there will still be times when mistakes will be made. Perfection is not demanded, only an honest attempt to live a better life. This shows me the gentleness of this wonderful Program at its very best. As a former-perfectionist, I need to realize that it's okay to try and fail.

AA is about spiritual growth, and if I'm not growing, then I'm backsliding toward my addiction. So it is important for me to face my issues such as dishonesty, resentment, and fear, and to get into the habit of dealing with them immediately. Today is the only place where I can make a difference.

Susan A.



If there was a problem in my personal life, avoidance was the usual way I dealt with it. Now I know that procrastination does not usually solve a difficulty. Paradoxically, sometimes I

How to reach us

Submit group news, medals, other event notices, letters to the editor or articles to **BETTER TIMES (before Oct. 10 for the Nov. issue)**, mail to GTA Intergroup, 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 202, Toronto, ON, M4P 1K5, by fax 416-487-5855 or by e-mail to btimes@aatoronto.org or e-mail joe@vex.net. Only signed submissions with a means of contact will be accepted. For subscriptions call Alexx at 416-487-8110.

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Opinions expressed in BETTER TIMES are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Greater Toronto Area Intergroup.

Archives Alley

Archives Breakfast

The 19th Annual Archives Breakfast will be held on Sunday, November 9, this year. Once again, this unique event will be at the Oasis Convention Centre at 1036 Lakeshore Road East in Mississauga, between Hwy 27 and Cawthra Rd. This will be the fifth year that the fantastic buffet and ample free parking has attracted this wonderful event to the Oasis.

Attendance in recent years has been limited to 275, the capacity of the Oasis dining room, so get your tickets early from one of the folks listed below or through 234. Your group rep should also have tickets at \$22 per person. Tickets will also be sold at the door – but don't get 'shut out'.

The fantastic 10 a.m. buffet is preceded by coffee and fellowship that usually kicks off well before 9 a.m. The meeting itself gets underway at 11 a.m.

This year, Ann M., a long-time Toronto resident, will travel from Ridgeway, Ontario, to share with us. Ann will be joined by Ben W., a fixture at the *Thornclyffe Park Group*. In addition, Bob D., who recently celebrated his 45th Anniversary in Barrie, will chair the meeting portion of the event.

A display of Archives material will be set up in the main lobby for review. It is vital that we remain true to the vision of our founders. We have a responsibility to recognize the effort and dedication of early members, who discovered through painful trial and error the successful methods that are now taken for granted by so many of us. So the purpose of the breakfast is not only to celebrate the long-term sobriety that so many of us enjoy, but also to remember our predecessors and to learn the lessons of the past. The Steps and Traditions "come alive" when studied in the context of evolution. It is a great opportunity for newcomers to learn of our rich history. So come, bring a friend, and enjoy great fellowship.

Tickets available from 234 (or Intergroup rep) 416-487-5591, Bob D. 416-248-1391, Eddy G. 216-536-7536, John G. 905-889-6828.

Have You Heard?

Recent Medallions:

Dionne M., 1 yr., *Tuesday Night Discussion Group*, Sept. 16
Lisa Marie B., 10 yrs., *Anniversary Group*, Sept. 17
Endree M., 1 yr., *Tuesday Night Discussion Group*, Sept. 23
Andrew S., 1 yr., *Tuesday Night Discussion Group*, Sept. 30
Rich E., 5 yrs., *Wexford Group*, Sept. 30
Mike McG., 1 yr., *Parkway Group*, Sept. 22

Upcoming Medallions:

Mike H., 1 yr., *Bayview Group*, Oct. 1
Gill M., 1 yr., *Bayview Group*, Oct. 8
Roger L., 10 yrs., *Welcome Group*, Oct. 19
Sean L., 1 yr., *Bayview Group*, Oct. 28
Bill J., 50 yrs., *Bayview Group*, Oct. 31

Group Anniversaries:

Don Mills Group celebrates their 40-year Group Anniversary, Wednesday, Oct. 8

New Life Group (Mississauga) celebrates their 35-year Group Anniversary, Oct. 7.

Things We Cannot Change

The following AA members died recently:

Al C., *Bayview Group*, Sept. 1, over 29 yrs. sober.
Bruce L., *New Life Group* Aug. 6, 35 yrs. sober.

Special Events, Conventions & Conferences

More information on all these events is available on the bulletin board at the GTA Intergroup offices (address below).

East York Roundup. Saturday Nov. 1, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. St. Columba Church, 2723 St. Clair Ave. (East of O'Connor Drive). Al-Anon Family Panel, Women's Panel, Long Timers "Ask-It-Basket", keynote speaker, fellowship, Pot-Luck supper. Admission: 7th Tradition at the door.

8th Annual Mississauga Fall Roundup.

"*Miracles of All Ages*" Saturday, October 11, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, 3625 Cawthra Rd. South of Burnhamthorpe. \$15 including cold buffet lunch. Info: Scott M. 905-454-5008. Steve A. 416-236-4914.

New Groups

Here and Now (C) (CENTRAL) Saturday 10:30 a.m., St. Andrew's United Church, 117 Bloor Street East. at Church Street, (meeting held upstairs).

Meeting Changes

GRAPEVINE DISCUSSION (C) Thurs 8:30 p.m. CENTRAL Now Back at Orthopaedic Hospital 43 Wellesley St. E. - 8th Floor.

No Name Group (C) NORTH Tuesday 8 p.m. Step discussion now a non-smoking meeting. Non-alcoholic sign language interpreter allowed.

No Name Group (O)/(C) NORTH, Thursday 8 p.m. Closed Topic discussion first 3 Thursdays of the month. Open Speaker meeting last Thursday of the month.

Pefferlaw Action Group (O)/(C) SUBURBAN NORTH, new location Cedardale Church of the Nazarene, 471 Pefferlaw Rd., Pefferlaw. Non-smoking, non-accessible, non-alcoholic sign language interpreters NOT allowed at closed meet-

ings. 1st week of the month Open Discussion, 2nd week Open Speaker meeting, 3rd & 4th week Closed Step Discussion.

Frontrunners Group (C) CENTRAL, 8 p.m. meeting located at end of hall, room on left, "Living Sober" and Step discussion non-smoking. non-accessible, non-alcoholic sign language interpreters NOT allowed.

York Central Hospital (C) SUBURBAN NORTH Thurs. 12 noon., Discontinued

New Beginnings. SUBURBAN NORTH WEST., Thurs. 8 p.m. (O) Sat. 1:30 p.m.(C)

Here's How (O) SUBURBAN NORTH WEST Sunday 8 p.m. re-opened.

The Energy Group (C) Fri. 8:30 p.m. SUBURBAN EAST, Time now changed to 8 p.m., Big Book and 12 Step study.

Streetsville Action Group. (O)/(C). SUBURBAN WEST. Wed. 8:30 p.m. open speaker meeting. 7 p.m. closed discussion meeting.

Fallingbrook Discussion Meeting (C) (EAST) Monday 8 p.m. Name and Time change:

Meeting Now Called **Twelve Step Group Discussion.** meeting now at 8:15 p.m. Last Monday of the month: Open Topic Discussion.

Reaching Out Discussion Group(C) (SUBURBAN NORTH WEST) Wed. 8 p.m. day/location change: Now on Thurs. at 8 p.m., New Location: St Paul's Presbyterian Church, 723 Balmoral Drive, Brampton. Enter meeting through parking lot. Step Discussion, Last Wed. of the month Topic Discussion. Non-Smoking, Wheelchair Accessible.

GLENHOLME GROUP CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

The *Glenholme Group*, which is located at 640 Glenholme Ave., just east of Dufferin at Eglinton, was started on October 24, 1983. I have been given the honour and privilege of writing about the early years of the *Glenholme* and its members. If you were to ask why I became a member of the group, I would say it is because of the unity of the group and my sponsor Ida.

Ida is known as "little Ida of the *Glenholme*." She may be small, but she's mighty generous with her heart, smiles and glaring eyes. She is very active in every aspect of her life, whether it is in service work or just lending an ear. Ida is always there for you.

Whether it is the Blossom Festival in Niagara Falls, the ORC, AA Information Day, or even Founders' Day in Akron, you will always see a number of *Glenholme* members attending these events together.

Joe C., who has passed away, was one of the co-founders of the group. Joe was approached by Father John of St. Thomas Aquinas church and asked if he could arrange meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous at the church. Without hesitation, Joe went to work with the unconditional love and support of his wife Blanche (non-alcoholic) and the

See Glenholme, Page 4

Greater Toronto Area Intergroup GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, August 26, 2003

THOSE PRESENT: 44 groups; 6 District Liaisons; 8 committee Chairs or Reps

Finance Report

Income for July was \$10,647; expenses were \$16,980, leaving a deficit of -\$6,333. There are openings on the Finance committee. Please contact 234 if interested.

Subcommittee Reports

ACCESS ABILITY –

Stephanie K. (Hill),

Chairperson

A liaison from the Twelfth Step committee has been appointed to work with this committee on various issues. Copies of the Code of Ethics for Sign-Language Interpreters were available for Reps at this meeting.

ARCHIVES – John G.

(Unionville), **Chairperson**

The **Annual Archives Breakfast** will take place **Sunday November 9** at the Oasis Convention Centre in Mississauga. The cost is \$22 per person. Tickets available at 234.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES – Matti H. (Wanstead),

Operating Committee liaison

More volunteers have been obtained for the Mimico facility (Dist.02). Mimico's Youth facility is in need of copies of the

Intergroup Report



Grapevine; please contact Dist.06 CF Chair Bob Bannen c/o 234. The Spanish District (16) is in need of volunteers for several committees; please contact 234

GRAPEVINE – Mary J.

(Saturday Morning Disc.),

Operating Committee liaison

Some Grapevine audiotapes are still available at a sale price; please contact Linda in the Literature Dept. for more details.

NEWSLETTER – Jim H.

(Keep It Simple), **Better**

Times Chairperson

Better Times is always looking for stories and articles from AA members in the GTA regarding AA-related events of interest. **Monthly deadline** for these and other announcements is on the **10th day of the previous**

month.

ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE – Clay R. (Pine Hills), ORC 2004 Chairperson

The theme for the upcoming event is "Sobriety and More in 2004". The event will be held **March 19, 20, and 21 2004 at the Royal York Hotel.**

PUBLIC INFORMATION –

Kevin M. (North Toronto),

Chairperson

New York requested a P.I. panel to be present at the upcoming International Science Fiction Convention. Volunteers for P.I. will be present at the event.

RECEPTION – Mark C. (St. Joseph's St. Meeting),

Operating Committee liaison

Mark thanked members for helping to set up the meeting, partic-

ularly Chris L. from the Yorkville group.

SELF-SUPPORT – Jim A.

(Parkway), **Self-Support committee member**

Enthusiastic Volunteers are needed to be a part of this committee. Jim reported that he was voted in as new Self-Support Alternate Chair. This committee is working on a one-page brochure dealing with Self-Support; what it is, and why it is so important.

TREATMENT FACILITIES –

Diana M. (Thorncliffe Park),

Chairperson

Some meetings are now open again in treatment facilities and hospitals. Contact 234.

TWELFTH STEP – John

Barker (High Park), Twelfth

Step committee member

Volunteers are needed for Phone Duty, 12 Step work, and the committee itself.

WEB SITE – Gord MacKay

(New Anchor), **Operating**

Committee liaison

Groups are reminded that they can have a **group page** on the site, simply by putting one together on a group level and submitting it. **Volunteers / ideas are always welcome.**

Full committee reports available from 234. All committee meetings are open to any interested AA member. Call 234 (416-487-5591) for times and locations.

SELF-SUPPORT, WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Self-Support means a lot of things to a lot of people. To this alcoholic, it is giving back to Alcoholics Anonymous what was so freely given me. But first things first. In order for my service work to be effective, I need to take care of myself. **FIRST** I need to work my program of recovery according to the principles of AA.

I can also support AA inside and outside my home group and take on various positions. But what about AA as a whole? What if there is not anyone on the phones? Who would help the newcomer trying to phone AA for the first time? I am grateful – and lucky – that someone picked up the phone when I first called.

What about committees? What if there wasn't a self-sup-

port committee? Or an operating committee? Or a 12 Step committee? What then? For myself, I would feel like an abandoned ship floating aimlessly in the middle of the ocean. The above mentioned committees, along with others, help keep AA true to the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and what AA is all about.

Service enables AA to survive. Having alcoholics get into service will enable AA to make it to the next day, so we can all have a place to help us with our problem of alcoholism. I know I thoroughly enjoy giving back.

How responsible have I been according to our Responsibility Pledge? I know I have done everything asked of me – sometimes grudgingly, but I did it for the good of AA as a

whole. I need to do my part in helping AA survive. The hand of AA can reach out to the still suffering alcoholic who groups cannot reach.

If I am not spiritually and mentally healthy, and standing on stable ground, I cannot be of help or service to anyone else. I need to work the 12 Steps and the 12 Traditions to be happily and usefully whole. Through recovery, unity and service is one way we can give away what has been given to us.

Self-Support is the way I show gratitude by using the tools of AA to help another suffering alcoholic.

*Phil M., Self-Support
Committee Member*

Glenholme (from page 3)

late Fergie O'G. (recovering alcoholic). Blanche was known for her baked goods, cheese, and crackers. She continued to support the *Glenholme Group*, even after her husband passed away. The *Traditional Group* also gave tremendous support when *Glenholme* first started.

The *Glenholme Group* is very active in service. They have had two past DCM's and three members of the operating committee of Toronto Intergroup. The group also established a meeting at the Homestead Women's Treatment Facility. The group conscience continues to carry the message to the suffering alcoholic.

All are invited to attend the group anniversary celebration on October 27, 2003.

*Yours in Love and
Service.....Deborah M.*