

BETTER TIMES

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BETTER TIMES

Published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area

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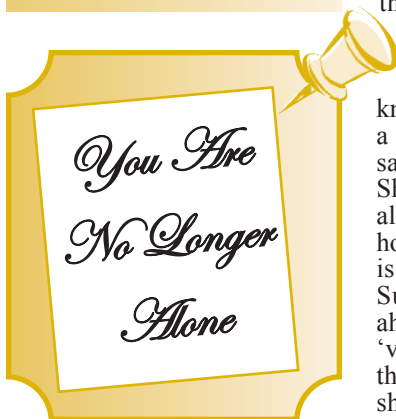
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Submit group news, medallions,
other event notices, letters to the
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Joe and Charlie

A Special Archives Alley Article
By Bernadette MacL.

*"All the answers you will ever
need are in the Big Book."*

Those who are familiar with the Big Book published in April of 1939 know this to be true. Over the years, misinformation and half-truths have come up in regard to the program of recovery in the Big Book. Interpretation is widespread. Many of our long timers have been troubled by a departure from the exacting path that was written and edited by the first hundred members of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Consequently, when Joe McQ. and Charlie P. met with some AA members in Tulsa, Oklahoma, they were asked to present a program on the Big Book. Having met each other in 1973, their mutual fascination with the Big Book, mainly the particular sequence in which it was written, convinced them this was a good idea. Soon they were driving long distances to convey the message of the Big Book and present their humorous and inter-

esting tutorial at AA conventions. A tape was made of what would be called "The Big Book Study". At the 1980 International Convention of AA in New Orleans, Wesley P. from Pompano Beach, Florida organized a luncheon and gave out Joe and Charlie tape sets for door prizes. The reaction was immediate and they were invited to 36 seminars across the country for the next year.

The Joe and Charlie Big Book Seminar is coming once more to Toronto for Big Book enthusiasts and those who seek to learn. It will be held at the University of Toronto - O.I.S.E. - 252 Bloor St. West (Bloor and Bedford) on Saturday July 31 and Sunday August 1, 2004. The tickets are \$20.

The Big Book Study presenters are not paid for their services. They receive travel expenses, meals, and lodging which are



paid for by the independent host committee sponsoring the Big Book Study. This is in accordance with the AA guidelines of Conferences and Conventions (MG4) published by GSO. As always the committee's books will be open to AA.

The founders involved in presenting the study, Joe McQ. and Charlie P., are no longer as active. Since they first started in 1977, Joe McQ. has had to cut back on his traveling. Oddly enough, another Joe, Joe McC., who was active in the study group from the beginning, took his place. Recently, Charlie P. opted for semi-retirement. Joe McC., Jim B., from Jamestown, N.Y., and our own Wes B. from Toronto will have the time-honoured opportunity to carry the "precisely how we have recovered" message. Claude L. of the Bayview Group will chair this year's host committee.

See Joe and Charlie Page 3

Becky's First Meeting

It was a cold, dark Sunday night in March 2004, when a lady (let's call her 'Becky') made her way to an open AA meeting. Just that same day she had made a desperate call to "234" in the hope that Alcoholics Anonymous could help with her drinking problem. She had been directed to this meeting not knowing what to expect; with only a memory of a telephone voice saying, "We can help you". She got on her bicycle and pedaled a very long way from her home (as the voice said, "This is your closest meeting for a Sunday night"). What lay ahead she did not know but the 'voice' had said not to drink that day, go to a meeting and she would receive help. "The

hand of AA is always there," but not for 'Becky' that night.

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer and everyone left or gathered in circles and left 'Becky' out.



I would not write this article had I not seen it myself. I went to 'Becky' (who did not even have a coffee in her hand!) and

spoke to her. She seemed frightened, as by now, all of the women had left the meeting. She told me her story, or at least a little of it. I did my best by giving her the phone number of a lady AA member to call the next morning. I checked with the same lady the next day, and thanks to a Higher Power, 'Becky' had phoned.

Next time, I will tell you about 'Alice'. Three times she went alone to a well-attended Saturday night meeting and didn't even receive a handshake.

There is no worse feeling than feeling alone in an AA meeting.

Walter C.

Did you hear the joke about the twenty-nine hundred drunks who went to downtown Toronto on the weekend? The Punch Line is ... 'And nobody got into trouble'.

Actually there were twenty-nine hundred and fifty-seven of them, which is quite amazing when you think about it. There was a time when I didn't need anybody else along with me to get 'into trouble' in downtown Toronto on a weekend, or anywhere else for that matter. If I'd run into another twenty-nine hundred and fifty-six people like me, God only knows what might have happened!

Back to the so-called joke. The reason we didn't get into trouble is because we were all at the Ontario Regional Conference of AA, looking for 'Sobriety and More...in 2004'. To me, the 'More' we were

The Editors Say...

What The ORC Means To Me

looking for is Service and Fellowship in Action (on a major scale). It's a giant, week-end-long Open Meeting - the friendliest place in the world. You run into people from everywhere, all celebrating their Sobriety and helping each other. I've met people from all over the world at ORC's; from Alberta to Atlanta, Britain to Bermuda, Calgary to California - (you could go through the alphabet!) It drives home the lesson that this fellowship *is* for everybody (but you have to want it to get it). You can see and feel it working at the ORC.

Of course, there are speakers from all over North America, and there is always a

balance of Canadian and US Speakers. There is also representation and involvement for all the AA Service Committees, AI-Anon and AI-Ateen. Personally, I find the availability of excellent speakers with stirring messages to be a major benefit of the ORC. I don't care *where* a speaker is from, as long as he or she makes sense and is actively helping to 'Carry the Message'. That's what it's all about. This year's Kickoff Speaker was another ex-U.S. Marine (I've met quite a few in the Fellowship - seems to go with the territory). Hey, I'm glad he's on our side! And the Closing Speaker - the 'Lady from Atlanta' - Wow! What a story she had! As Danny McK. announced at the

end, "Maybe we did save the best for last."

All I can say about the ORC is, "If I hadn't been there, I would have missed it all!"

I'm always whacked out afterwards (carting Committee stuff back and forth, etc.) so the ORC Committee members and volunteers are really burnt out! This year's ORC was a resounding success. Clay R., outgoing ORC Chair and his Committee and Volunteers deserve our thanks for a great job.

And (Drumroll!) ... if you think *that* was something, with almost three thousand people at the ORC, just wait till next summer when sixty thousand (yes, I said sixty thousand) people are here for the AA World Conference! See *you* there!

Kevin M.

You Are No Longer Alone

Before alcoholism took deep root in me, I may not have been the life of the party. I was sure part of it though, especially in the 1950s when Bill Haley and The Comets came along with his 'Rock-N-Roll' song. I was in the Indian Air Force. With the help of booze, I acquired many friends. Alcohol was my motivator, so I was never alone.

I got married in the 1960s, and kept myself busy as a family man with a wife and four children, with few friends. I was drinking 'occasionally' to entertain my family, but only because Madras was dry.

Then in 1972, prohibition was abolished in Madras, and there was no more 'hush-hush' drinking. I was *the* entertainment for the family.

In the 1980s, entertaining others sort of tapered off as I was running out of jokes and antics. They say that an alcoholic always prefers company equal or lower to himself. I could not find either, so I began drinking alone, with

only myself for company.

To avoid the crowded atmosphere in the home, I would walk into my favorite booze shop four or five doors away. At two in the afternoon this place was usually quiet. I



looked around and saw a couple of lonely souls sprawled on the floor in their own vomit and urine. I said to myself, "this is no way to be drinking".

Months later, the very thing I disapproved of happened to me in my own home! I was still with my wife and four children, but all alone!

Then sometime in 1987, I discovered that I was having company. They were uninvited, unexpected and certainly unwanted. I was hearing voices and seeing things. The 'demons' were following me wherever I went, and I seemed to be on the fringe of lunacy. To rid myself of these 'wackos', I had to be fed intravenously. Detox! After many such episodes, I was finally rid of them when I was introduced to the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in August 1988.

In AA, I found friends like I'd never known before. Being a landed immigrant in Scarborough these past two years, my AA buddies don't look startled, rub their eyes and blink when they see me, like they're seeing a demon. As long as I'm in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous I shall no longer be alone.

Ronny H.

By The Book

I still remember the first time I ever opened a Big Book. I had been sober for less than a day, and had just returned from my first meeting in almost 15 years (I had gone to one meeting when I was a teenager, but nobody had what I wanted).

I remember skipping over the Forwards, and starting with the Doctor's Opinion. Not a fatal mistake by any means, but an unfortunate one. There is much to be learned within these leading pages, which I suppose is often overlooked.

For instance, the Foreword to the First Edition contains key elements of the Traditions that would not be written for many years. Concepts like anonymity, self support, autonomy and the requirement for an 'honest' desire to stop drinking are introduced.

The Foreword to the Second Edition describes the success of our program and fellowship as a 'wholesale miracle'. It also admits that, at first, there were many failures, but occasionally, someone would stay sober. It goes on to say that half of the people who came and 'really tried' (this would be the important part for those of you paying attention) stayed

See *Book page 3*

Joe and Charlie from Page 1

In the past 24 years, an estimated 200,000 members of various Twelve Step programs have experienced the spiritual benefits of these Big Book Studies. The particular arrangement of the Book is no accident. Beginning with the list of contents through the Forewords, First to Fourth Editions are brought to light as it was written. Dr. Silkworth, author of the Doctor's Opinion, outlines the types of alcoholics and the disease's medical model. Delving into Bill's Story, the progression of alcoholism is emphasized, as is the ignoble bottoming out before his altering spiritual experience. Both writings underscore the problem, while Chapters 2, 3 and 4 highlight the solution. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 further stress finding the answer. In clarifying the fourth step, the study offers simplicity in the sometimes-difficult stages of taking the steps. Over two days, the strength and hope guaranteed in the Big Book becomes a reality for many attendees. The pages written by the first recovered members of AA come alive and the precise process of completing the steps is simplified.

The closing of the seminar is poignant and profound as all in unison declare aloud what is written on Page 164 of our beloved Big Book:

"We shall be with you in the fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you until then."

Bernadette MacL.

Book from page 2

sober at once. Of the ones who didn't try, and didn't want it, 2/3 came back eventually. Go Figure!

The Forward to the Third Edition continues to discuss the mushroom expansion of AA in all lifestyles, religions and ages. "Each day, somewhere in the world, recovery begins with when one alcoholic talks with another alcoholic."

I chaired the *New Anchor Big Book Meeting* the other

Recent Medallions:

Doug W., 1 yr, *Friendly Group*, April 19.
Rick B., 1 yr, *Bloordale Group*, April 23.
Helen MacC., 5 yrs., *New Anchor*, April 29.
Brian M., 15 yrs., *Thorncliffe Park*, April 30.

Upcoming Medallions:

Catherine M., 5 yrs., *Bloordale Group*, May 2
Carolina C., 10 yrs., *Bellamy Group*, May 3
Kim., 1 yr., *Fellowship Group*, May 3
Andy L., 5 yrs *Agincourt Acorn* May 4
Nadir K., 1 yr., *New Anchor Group*, May 6
Kenny C., 15 yrs., *Westmoreland*, May 8 (medallion at Scott Mission Sat 2 p.m. Meeting)
Rosemary 30 yrs., *Sat Morn Discussion* May 8
Nonni G. 25 yrs., *Sat Morn Discussion* May 8
Sandra C. 5 yrs., *Sat Mor Discussion* May 8
Cynthia M., 10 yrs., *Agincourt Acorn* May 10
Mike B., 10 yrs., *Friendly Group*, May 10
Paul Q., 5 yrs., *Westmoreland*, May 11
Bev D., 10 yrs., *Bloordale Group*, May 16
Jane J., 1 yr., *New Anchor Group*, May 20
Helen McL., 15 yrs., *Bloordale Group*, May 23
Jane, 1 yr., *New Anchor Group* May 30
Anne S. 20 yrs., *Bellamy Group* June 7th
Steve G., 20 yrs., *New Anchor Group*, Jun 17

Group Anniversaries:

Saturday 2 P.M. Meeting (O) (Central): May 8 celebrates 8 years of service.

Things We Cannot Change:

Rae C., 49 years sober, a founding member of the *Lawrence Plaza Group*, passed away recently.

Meeting Changes:

Mon. Night Fifth Tradition Big Book (C) (Sub. West) now at 7:30 p.m.

St. Jamestown Group (Central) Fridays (C), Sundays (O) at 8 p.m. Wheelchair Accessible. Friday Discussion 'OPEN TOPIC'. Enter at Howard St. entrance, at back of church.

New Meetings:

Primary Purpose Group (O) Central (Wednesdays 7:30 p.m.): Christ Church, 1570 Yonge St., at Heath St. and Yonge, one block N of St. Clair subway, at Yonge (NW corner). Format is Open Speakers meeting, followed by main speaker. Non-smoking, not accessible.

night, and was rather excited. We had finished to page 164 the week prior and were starting over. I directed everyone to the Doctor's Opinion, and began the reading there. After the meeting, a friend of mine said he was disappointed the Forewords were not included in our study, for they contain more about the alcoholic, recovery and our fellowship than most good talks at a podium.

I reread them again, and I agree with him.

'Bible' Gord MacK.

Have You Heard?

Saturday A.M. Men's Meeting (O/C) Sub.NW. (8:30 a.m.): Bethesda Lutheran Church, 20 Union St., corner of Union and Euclid, Unionville, 2 blocks N of Hwy 7, 1 block W of Main St. Big Book meeting. Interpreters welcome. Non-smoking, not accessible.

Special Events, Conventions & Conferences:

INFORMATION AA DAY Saturday, May 15, 2004, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Lansing United Church. Tickets \$5. See flyers, or contact www.aatoronto.org/Events/Info_One.htm or aaday2004@hotmail.com.

Joe & Charlie's BIG BOOK STUDY presented by Joe McC. (Tulsa, Oklahoma), Jim B. (Jamestown, NY) and Wes B. (Toronto, Ontario) Saturday, July 31 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and Sunday, August 1 (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) at O.I.S.E. / U of T, 252 Bloor St. West (Bloor and Bedford), Toronto. Tickets \$20. Refreshments will be supplied. FOR INFO / TICKETS, see flyers or contact 234.

Lost and Found

A pair of lady's eyeglasses were found at the ORC. They were left at one of the Literature suites. Please contact Carole at 234.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

At the last General Meeting of Greater Toronto Area Intergroup, the following requests for volunteers were made. Please contact 234 for more information.

Twelve Step Committee – Four Coordinators are needed to contact members of the Twelve Step Committee when there is a "no-show" on the telephones at 234 and find members to man the phones.

Twelve Step Committee – More phone volunteers are needed! Phone Training Sessions are held every third Sunday of the month at 1:30 p.m. at 234.

Website Committee – The Committee is always looking for new members.

The Toronto East General Hospital Meeting - needs support.

The Treatment Facilities Committee - A Secretary is needed for the summer months.

Calling Rexdale (and Beyond...) Come to the Saturday Morning Discussion Group

Tucked way down in the southwest corner of Scarborough District 22, nowhere near a freeway, is Community Centre 55, the home of the *Saturday Morning Discussion Group*, which celebrated 25 years of service to suffering alcoholics this March.

We all know, as Tradition

Five states, that each group has but one primary purpose: to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. So, for those of you 'way out yonder', at least two hours transit time from the Main and Gerrard area, here's your chance for an excursion.

Pack yourself up and c'mon

See Rexdale Page 4

Where is Everybody?

Another month, and a brand new look for the Intergroup Report. We have taken the rigid format away, and brought a more personal glance at that strange anomaly, The Greater Toronto Area Intergroup Meeting.

There was a scattering of members around the room, pointing out the unfortunate lack of participation of many Groups on their Intergroup floor. With only 54 Groups and four Districts represented, it appears more than half of the GTA members have decided to have someone else voice their opinions on how AA in our great city conducts its affairs in our great city, and abandoned their 'Right of Decision'. With this attitude, are we really ready for an International Conference?

Perhaps those not present are satisfied with the fact that income is down this year, primarily due to a reduction of over \$8,000 in literature sales, and that the subjects of "money and deficit" would not be nagging at us each month if Groups and Individuals simply donated more frequently, instead of at the end of the year.

Perhaps they don't care one way or the other what Grapevine materials are avail-

Intergroup Report



able to them. This seems to be hot issue lately, as Intergroup fumbles to decide if they will carry everything, nothing, or something in between. Scott MacD. told us we will be finding out soon, and in the meantime, we can order from him (he's even got floppy disks), or from New York at (212) 870-3301, or through the website at www.aagrapevine.org. Interestingly, this site will apparently have every Grapevine letter published between 1944 and 2002 starting in June, where it will be free for a month. Add a bookmark to your "favorites" folder as you only have 30 days; Lord

knows alcoholics seem to resent paying for anything.

The Self-Support Committee seems to care, and is once again trying to visit each Group in the city to carry the message that GTA Intergroup needs your help.

Clay R. modestly praised the success of this year's ORC. While over 2,900 people attended, with a banquet filled to capacity, the same old complaints about not understanding the "southern draws" and lack of Canadian content, particularly in the promotional material, were tossed in to quell the cheers. When I

attended the 2003 SARS concert, I heard a young Justin Timberlake fan complain that most of the acts were "these old people I never heard of." There's one in every crowd.

And it just wouldn't be Intergroup without the fair Christine M. to give us the monthly update from the website. These folks have had it tough lately, with losing their host provider and some misinformation wreaking havoc. Christine assured us that the website is now better than ever.

The Archives Committee has the latest release of *50 Years of AA in Ontario* and is looking to put the book on CD. Intergroup will be carrying the publication soon for \$14 bucks. Bob D. mentioned that 18 had been sold at the ORC, and that two more 'went missing' at the ORC. Maybe it was the same bandits who nabbed the coffee pot from us before the meeting.

I sincerely hope at the upcoming election in April there are a few extra members running for positions on the Operating Committee. As it stands, four will be needed. These should be elected positions, not acclaimed postings. Besides, we should have a few on the back burner in case any more "drop off".

Gord MacK.

Rexdale from page 3

down! We've got a Big Book Study, Beginner's Meeting, Step Discussion, and an Open Topic room going on all at once...and coffee you'll want to tell your friends about.

The *Saturday Morning Discussion Group* is, in my opinion as a member, a strong group. We've consistently had representation at Intergroup and at District. We may not have much money, but we have enough; (and even a little bit extra to send to support AA's 12th Step work after our bills are paid).

Business meetings take care of business among friends with a common purpose, and many members do service work, such as putting on meetings at the Metro East Detention Centre or sitting on committees at

Intergroup or District.

Many groups in the GTA have Open Speaker Meetings, in addition to Closed Discussion Meetings, sometimes at a different location on a different day. I heard mention once at our business meeting that maybe we might consider also having an Open Speaker meeting. Our group meets in the old 55 Division Police Station and, although the many small rooms are ideal for discussion meetings, we don't have a big single room for an Open Speaker meeting. Somebody said: "...but then it wouldn't be a *Saturday Morning Discussion meeting!*"

Sometimes, things simply unfold as they're meant to be. **25 Years!** Come visit, stay awhile.

Tom S.

Greater Toronto Area Intergroup Meeting Roster @ 234

<u>COMMITTEE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>
Self-Support	Mon. May 3	7:30 p.m.
Grapevine	Thurs. May 13	7:00 p.m.
Archives	Fri. May 14	7:30 p.m.
CPC	Mon. May 10	7:00 p.m.
Corrections	Wed. May 12	7:30 p.m.
Treatment Facilities	Thurs. May 20	7:30 p.m.
Website	Sat. May 8	2:00 p.m.
Access Ability	Sun. May 16	11:00 a.m.
Phone Training Session	Sun. May 16	1:30 p.m.
Public Information	Mon. May 17	7:30 p.m.
Newsletter	Wed. May 19	7:30 p.m.
General Meeting GTAI (Glebe Rd United Church)	Tues. May 25	8:00 p.m.
Twelfth Step	Fri. May 28	6:30 p.m.