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### BETTER TIMES

Published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area

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#### How to reach us

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## Pancakes and Sausages for Three Hundred - No Problem!

‘D’o-people’ like the Salvation Army, Metro Health Services, Native Men’s Shelters and many others like them share something. They have one common interest: helping people who need it.

Sounds familiar? What a perfect place to ‘Carry the Message’! Over the years we’ve found that many of these other organizations often lack the most basic information about AA, or have run out of materials.

On Thursday, July 15, Metro Police 51 Division will once again host their ‘Breakfast In the Park’ at Allan Gardens in the heart of downtown Toronto’s AA District 10, starting at 8 a.m. and running until approximately noon. This event allows us to get in touch with them, and supply other organizations with things they can use like Newcomers’ Pamphlets, Is AA For You?, It Happened to Joe, AA and the Native American, and copies of

BETTER TIMES. That way, they can pass on materials right at street level. This is a far better use of our materials than leaving them sitting on a shelf at 234! Also, we make many valuable contacts for information, mutual support and cross-communications.



We won’t be flipping the flapjacks, but the Public Information Committee will be there, carrying the message to the still-suffering Alcoholic; and there are many down there. New PI Chair Tom S. and his volunteers will be handing out information about the Fellowship mostly newcomer’s information, to both ‘potential members’ and to the many Social Service Organizations that attend.

Our Fellowship’s Public Information Committee has won two Awards from Metro Police for our involvement with this event. As I recall, the first one was a complete surprise. It was delivered to my office, and our receptionist advised me that a *large* Police Officer was asking for me in the lobby. My immediate reaction was, “God, what have I done *now!*”

I couldn’t think of anything I’d done lately; and hiding in the bathroom wasn’t an option, since I would have to go through the lobby anyway. Out I went, and I was glad to see Constable John Segriff, 51 Division’s Community Liaison Officer, standing there! The Award looks nice at 234.

A couple of years ago, it rained on the ‘Breakfast’ morning, which meant that everybody stayed around the tents. All the first-comers ate second helpings and they served so many breakfasts that they ran

*See Pancakes Page 2*

## Joe C. - 50 Years of Recovery and Service

In 1954 in Montreal he was 29, married, and had three children with one on the way. He found his personal bottom and found the open doors of AA that year. This city, known for its clubs and nightlife, was also known to Joe as ‘basic training’ for AA.

Today, Joe is 79, living happily in Toronto, twice widowed with seven children, 12 grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

In 50 years of sobriety, Joe survived the deaths of two women whom he loved with all of his heart. Along the way, he brought up seven children sin-

gle-handedly and has lived through multiple strokes and heart attacks, but if you ask him today, he will tell you what a perfect life he has in sobriety.

It’s impossible to count the number of AA lives he has touched through his willingness to stay involved. He joins any committees for which he is asked to volunteer.

Joe has seen ten World Conferences and has attended two of them.

In his retirement, he spends most of his free time working on, for and in the AA program.

Joe belongs to a close, happy family, and is described

as its ‘rock’; the glue that holds them together through every happy and troubled time. Since finding AA in 1954, he has provided the gift of love to everyone he touches.

*Monica C. Joe is a past Editor and current active member of Better Times. The Editorial Committee joins Joe’s family (D’Arcy, Linda, Monica, Patrick, Agnes, Maureen, Kenneth, Shona, Frank, Keith, Dafna, Laurie, Allan, Josh, Steve, Aaron, Chris, Holly, Tiffany, Jonathan, Kaden and Jake) in congratulating Joe on 50 years continuous sobriety. He will be celebrating on June 22 at the Agincourt Acorn Group.*

Last month, we ran a story on the front cover called 'Becky's First Meeting', describing unfortunate occurrences at this lady's introduction to AA. It drove home how lucky I was to have walked into the *North Toronto Group* on a freezing cold night, and met not just one, but three people: Tom G., Don Y. and Jim P.

I have no idea who spoke that night, nor what they said, but I certainly remember those three. They were interested enough to talk to a very nervous newcomer. Tom G., who founded BETTER TIMES (among many other things), and Don Y., who hosted the "AA Hospitality Party" at New Year's with his wife Arlene, have both passed on. Jim P., I'm happy to report, is *still* at the Front Door saying, "Pilgrim, you've come to the Right Place."

## The Editors Say...

### There, but for the Grace of God

We cannot underestimate the importance of the 'Greeter at the Door', and the words in the Responsibility Pledge "I Want the Hand of AA Always To Be There". Here's the second story by Walter C., called 'Alice', that really points out *why* this is so important.

#### 'Alice'

"What happened to that girl? You know her, the one who wasn't dressed very well and kept to herself? You know, she sat in the back and just looked down at the floor?"

We called her 'Alice', and when this question was asked over coffee at that Saturday

Meeting, no one really knew the answer, because no-one had cared enough to shake 'Alice's' hand, get her a cup of coffee or listen to her. These things are a 'lost art' today.

It seems like everyone's here to tell us how good it is *now*, without alcohol in their life. But 'Alice' didn't have any 'good' times without alcohol in her life yet, and it was getting worse every day.

'Alice' went alone to a well-attended Saturday night AA Meeting for three weeks in a row, and no one even shook her hand, until one night I sat down beside her. She broke down, and after we talked a bit,

I looked around for a lady to help her further, but everybody was busy putting things away. After all, it was 'Hockey Night in Canada', and the game would be on when they got home.

The next time I saw 'Alice', I was volunteering at the Mental Health Unit at our Hospital. 'Alice' was pale-looking, dressed in a hospital gown, walking with her head down and had a bandage on her left wrist.

Walter C.

'There but for the Grace of God, go I'. A few kind words and a cup of coffee could have made a world of difference there. Food for thought for all of us here, and that's what BETTER TIMES is all about.

Kevin M.

## Keep Coming Back

This is the essence of our 12th Step. It allowed me to return to the day when I picked up a drink after twenty years of sobriety. I had stopped attending meetings in my seventeenth year, and I became 'stark raving sober' during the next three. I became self-centered, and I drank everyday for another three years. When I had hit bottom again, and had nowhere else to go, I'll never forget thanking God that 'Keep Coming Back' kept other long-timers here so that I had a place to return to.

It took the grace of another member to say to me, "You can come back, we need you, and the meetings are still here." Keep Coming Back reminds us to come back to another meeting, whether we were at one yesterday or whether we haven't been to a meeting in a long time. It gives us the grace to come back into the rooms of AA if we have picked up a drink.

Alcoholism is an illness

that is cunning, baffling, powerful ... and patient. It will convince me that, one day, I won't need to go to meetings; that I'll begin to feel I'm doing okay. It will tell me I have a life now that I've quit drinking. My work, family and

tonight' (I easily forget that when drinking there is no energy because I am passed out or I am hung over!). My ego will tell me that I've been to enough meetings, done enough service work and have worked all the steps enough to not need a meeting today. Today will turn into a week, a month or even years. I may pick up a drink or I may just be a member who doesn't attend meetings anymore.

Keep Coming Back places the principle of the common welfare of AA in our lives, and reminds us that we need to be here to keep the doors of AA open. We all need to Keep Coming Back so that we can work the 12 Steps in our own lives and we can be here to help the newcomers or a returning member find the 12 Steps for their life. To me, Keep Coming Back is the 12th Step in action, anytime anyone of us is at an AA meeting, anywhere.

Cathie D.  
5th Tradition Group.



other activities that I have acquired since coming into AA just take up so much of my time. I'll become busy with life, and I just won't 'have the energy to go to a meeting

### Pancakes from page 1

out of sausages. It cleared up and more 'customers' came. No sausages! In the nick of time, a police van arrived with more sausages, donated by a long-time member of the Fellowship.

Sausages for three hundred? No problem. Now, that's Service!

Many of the attendees not only have problems with alcohol, they also have other serious emotional, physical and medical problems that come with prolonged alcoholism. That's why there are so many social and medical support organizations down there. This year, the Public Information Committee will be joined by the Access Ability Committee, because many attendees down there may have difficulty getting to AA Meetings. The social and medical support organizations will benefit from more communication with another AA committee.

So remember, Thursday, July 15 at Allan Gardens for 'Breakfast in the Park'! Volunteers are always welcome, and we'll even give you Breakfast!

Kevin M. (former Public Information Chair)

## Archives Alley

### The Last Eyewitness

“Robert Ripley S. was born June 5, 1918 and was nicknamed ‘Smitty.’” So begins the story published in ‘Children of the Healer’, which he and his late sister, Sue W., published in 1992. Smitty died Thursday, April 22, 2004, at St. Francis Hospital in Memphis, Tenn., of congestive heart failure at the age of 85. He was the last living witness to the remarkable events that took place during May of 1935: the beginning of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The only son of Anne and Dr. Bob, Smitty was a teenager when the infamous meeting between his father and Bill W. took place on Mother’s Day 1935. His mother’s friend, Henrietta Sieberling, called to invite them over to see a man from New York who wanted to be of assistance to an alcoholic. Smitty had no idea that he was an eyewitness to history in the making, but life was so much better after that meeting. Instead of an alcoholic home, they lived in a recovery home.

After his schooling, Bob Jr. enlisted and became a pilot in WWII, flying active missions out of Africa. After the war, he became a commercial pilot, later settling in Nocona, Texas. He was married in 1944, and his wife Betty became a member of AA in the ‘70s. When he joined Al-Anon, he began to comprehend the huge contribution his parents had made. In Al-Anon he spent the last three decades sharing the gift that his father brought to the world. He often quipped that he was asked to speak “not for what he knew, but for who he knew.”

Sixty-nine years later, he was firm in the knowledge that what his most revered father had co-founded would continue to have global impact. He was very proud of that fact.

Bernadette MacL.

## Have You Heard?

**Message from ‘Glitchville’:** When computers are good, they’re very, very good; but when they’re BAD they’re HORRID! We thought all the BUGS were out of the bt@aatoronto.org Mailbox, but there was a RELAPSE...so a few announcements got “Lost in Space”. Here they are, and our (Belated) Congratulations!

**Karen H.**, 10 yrs., *Sat Morning Disc.*, Mar. 21.  
**Dan W.**, 10 yrs., *Half Century*, Apr. 5.  
**Denise F.**, 15 yrs., *King City*, May 10.  
**Norma L.**, 30 yrs., *Erin Mills*, May 24.

### RECENT MEDALLIONS

**Brian M.**, 15 yrs., *Thornclyffe Park*, May 7.  
**Gerry F.**, 10 yrs., *Lakeshore Group*, May 16.

### UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

**Gerry McK.**, 1 yr., *Agincourt Acorn*, Jun. 1.  
**Michelle S.**, 1 yr., *Markland Wood*, Jun. 2.  
**John M.**, 1 yr., *Noon Rap*, Jun. 4.  
**Steve M.**, 5 yrs., *Noon Rap*, Jun. 4.  
**Anne S.**, 20 yrs., *Bellamy*, Jun. 7.  
**Harold P.**, 1 yr., *Agincourt Acorn*, Jun. 8.  
**Orazio C.**, 1 yr., *Rexdale United*, Jun. 10.  
**Catherine C.**, 1 yr., *Bayview*, Jun. 13.  
**Wes B.**, 25 yrs., *Long Branch*, Jun. 14.  
**Bev D.**, 30 yrs., *Agincourt Acorn*, Jun. 15.  
**Steve G.**, 20 yrs., *New Anchor*, Jun. 17.  
**Joe C.**, 50 yrs., *Agincourt Acorn*, Jun. 22.  
**Frank G.**, 15 yrs., *Weston*, June 27.  
**Stephanie B.**, 1 yr., *Bayview*, Jun. 27.  
**Nicolle M.**, 10 yrs., *Agincourt*, Jun. 29.

### GROUP ANNIVERSARIES

**RESPONSIBILITY GROUP (C) 8:30 p.m.**  
**Tuesdays (Central)** will be celebrating 25 years of Service on **July 3. ALL WELCOME!**

### THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE

**Les K.**, over 35 years sober, formerly of the *Islington Group*, passed away on Feb. 25 after a lengthy illness.

**Bill S.**, over 30 years sober, a longtime member of the *King City Group*, passed away March 3.

### MEETING CHANGES

**Friends of Bill and Bob Meeting (C) Mondays noontime NORTHWEST:** Meeting is **CANCELLED for the summer.** Meeting will reopen the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of September.

**Liberty Meeting (O) Saturdays 8 p.m. WEST:** Meeting has a **NEW LOCATION** at Bonar-Parkdale Presbyterian Church, 250 Dunn Ave., west side of Dunn, south of Queen.

**Brampton Bad Boys Group (C) Tuesdays 8 p.m.:** Meeting has a **NEW TIME and NEW LOCATION.** They are now at the Church of Christ, 750 Clark Boulevard, Brampton, northeast corner of Clark and Finchgate. **Meeting to start at 7:30 p.m.**

**King City Group Discussion Meetings (C) Wednesday (SUBURBAN NORTH):** Announcing **NEW FORMATS and TIMES:** Step Disc. (1-12) 7 to 8:15 p.m. Steps 1-2-3 (downstairs) 7 to 8:15 p.m. Topic Discussion 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. (last Wed. of month Tradition). Big Book Discussion (Joe and Charlie tapes) downstairs 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. Open Meeting still on Mondays at 8 p.m. **ALL WELCOME!**

**Daily Reflections (C) Daily Monday to Friday**

**(SUBURBAN WEST) 12:15 start time each day.**

**No Name Group 8 p.m. Tuesday (C): Thursdays (O) : TEMPORARILY CANCELLED** until further notice.

**Brentcliffe Group 8 p.m. Tuesday (O): DISCONTINUED.**

### SPECIAL EVENTS, CONVENTIONS, and CONFERENCES

**Joe & Charlie’s BIG BOOK STUDY** presented by **Joe McC. (Tulsa, OK), Jim B. (Jamestown NY), and Wes B. (Toronto)** 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 MORE INFO / TICKETS**, see event flyer, or contact 234.

**Fourth Annual 11<sup>th</sup> STEP PICNIC** Saturday, August 21, 2004 at Centre Island (Olympic Island / follow signs), 12 noon to 6 p.m. All AA members and their families welcome! Snack bars near site, or bring your own picnic. **Speaker Meetings** at 1 p.m. (AA speaker), 2:30 p.m. (Al-Anon speaker), and 4 p.m. (AA speaker). Cost is free! *Donations are appreciated.* **FOR INFO**, Call Rick (416) 201-8573, Steve (647) 888-2921, or Barb (416) 747-9495 or log on to [www.11thsteppicnic.com](http://www.11thsteppicnic.com). *(If raining, event cancelled)*

**‘Welcome Home and More in 2004’ 35<sup>th</sup> Annual CENTRAL WEST ONTARIO CONVENTION** August 13, 14 and 15 at the University of Guelph / Guelph, Ontario. AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen Speakers, Discussions, and Talkathons. Sobriety Countdown, and Saturday Night dance to follow banquet. **FOR MORE INFO**, Contact CWOC Convention Chair Janice F (519) 650-5745 / [yeomen@golden.net](mailto:yeomen@golden.net), Registration Chair Ann P. (519) 353-5600 / [aep@computerwriter.com](mailto:aep@computerwriter.com), or Publicity Chair Kim L. [cwopublicity@sympati-co.ca](mailto:cwopublicity@sympati-co.ca).

**‘Courage to Change’ TORONTO GRATITUDE CONFERENCE** October 8, 9, and 10 in Toronto, Canada. **FOR MORE INFO**, see [www.torontogratitudeconference.org](http://www.torontogratitudeconference.org).

**SOBER SAILORS CONVENTION in the Caribbean** on the Celebrity Cruise ship *The Century* October 23 to 30, 2004. Speakers Mildred F. (Toronto ON), Keith L. (Wilmington NC), Bob D. (Las Vegas), Kathy H. (Cincinnati, OH), Bill P. (Centre City MN), and Dan Z. (West Palm Beach FL). **FOR MORE INFO**, call toll-free (866) 678-8785 or log on to [Friend\\_of\\_Bill\\_W.@mail.vresp.com](mailto:Friend_of_Bill_W.@mail.vresp.com).

### CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

**TWELFTH STEP Committee** – Due to members not showing up, the office has been closed down several times. Telephone Greeters are desperately needed. All that is required is one year of sobriety and completion of a phone training session. The Committee also needs Greeter Captains.

**CORRECTIONS Committee** – Volunteers are needed for the West Detention Centre in District 2. The Committee is also in need of a Secretary.

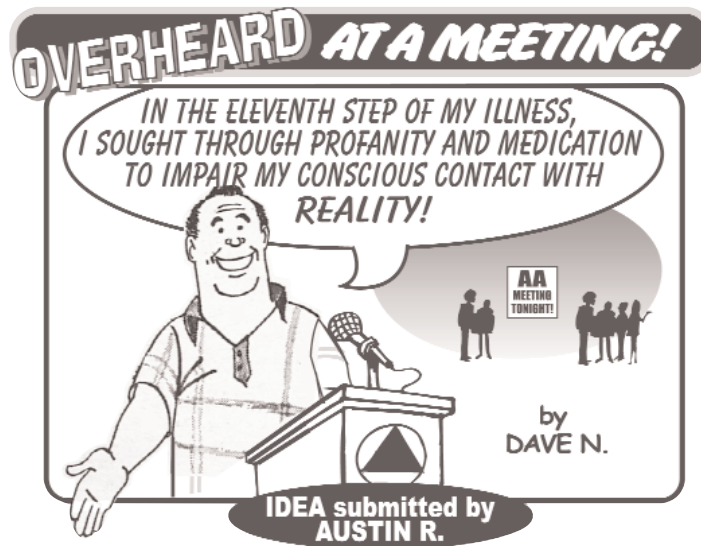
## And the Torch is Passed.

Derek F. delivered his final opening address via hand out, driving home some down to earth points for the 60 Groups represented to ponder. Along with his heartfelt thanks, he offered some very sensible suggestions, such as raising the prudent reserve to \$250,000 and adding another Gratitude Month type of event. "We must do something meaningful about money."

It must have worked, for they collected a record 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition in General Meeting history with \$236. Let's hope, now, that it continues working in the long term. Finances are still down, despite a better month in March. We are "closing the gap", but still over five and a half grand behind, and have once again had to borrow from the prudent reserve.

It is now a matter for Matti H. of the Wanstead Group, who was elected by acclamation to Chairperson of the Operating Committee. Carolyn

## Intergroup Report



R. seemed a popular choice to fill the open Senior position, as she was elected twice. Karl E., David Z. and Mike C. fill the remaining Junior positions, and with all luck, are about to embark on the bumpiest 18-month service stint of their

lives (I say that from experience).

A very special guest came to visit, bringing a plea from our sister program, Al-Anon. Carol P., the Public Outreach Coordinator, is hoping all

groups in the GTA will make Al-Anon meetings lists available, which they are more than happy to provide.

On a disturbing note, the phones at '234' have not been answered on several occasions due to a crucial lack of phone volunteers. Shifts are run usually short-handed, and occasionally, no one shows up. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help ...?

And there will be limited Grapevine materials available through GTA Intergroup after all, with a price sheet promised next month. If you're looking for a pocket planner, calendar, or the actual magazine, however, you'll need to find someone on the GSO Grapevine arm to set you up.

As next month is a workshop, expect to be educated. It may be time to let you all know just what this GTA Intergroup is all about. On the other hand, I may need the whole issue.

*Gord MacK.*

## Centre Island August Picnic

In February 2001, Rick S., *Trial and Error Group*, was returning home from a spiritual retreat, when the concept of an AA Summer Getaway warmed the cold winter air. With the help of Barbara Q., *Rexdale United Group*, John B., *Kipling Group*, and Steve E., *Kingsway Group*, he formed a committee to help turn his dream into reality. In August of that year, it was realized.

Four years later, the dream lives on. The Fourth Annual 11<sup>th</sup> Step Picnic is to be held on Saturday August 21, 2004, once again on beautiful Center Island in Toronto, Ont. This non-profit fun day, for AA members and their families, includes AA and Al-Anon open speaker meetings at 1 p.m., 2:30 p.m., and 4 p.m.

The picnic begins at noon, wrapping up at approximately 6 p.m., but members may come as early and stay as late as they wish. Barbecue pits are provid-

ed, and numerous snack bars are within walking distance for lunch or refreshments. Of course, there is Centreville for the kids.

Rick pretty much financed the first picnic, with the greatest costs being insurance and the permit for the sites on Centre Island. Approximately 75 people attended, which was less than anticipated, but understandable, as information for this event was limited.

The following year a nominal entrance fee was charged, but those who bought tickets were eligible to win a door prize of a weekend retreat at Manresa Spiritual Retreat. The attendance rate had doubled, and as a result, the entire cost of the picnic was covered, with enough left over to completely finance the entire cost the following year. In 2003, poor weather forecasts and threatening thunderstorms resulted in a lower attendance than 2002. The brave souls who did come

out had a great time and, as usual, heard fabulous speakers.

This year the picnic is once again FREE for all members and their families, with donation jars available in the hopes that the event will continue to be FREE.

Flyers have been distributed advertising this event, and are available at '234'. The event has it's own Website ([www.11thsteppicnic.com](http://www.11thsteppicnic.com)), but the best promise of a great time comes by 'word-of-mouth' from those who have attended previously.

This year's committee consists of Rick, Barbara and Steve once again, with the addition of Manny and Terri, *Rexdale United Group*. Anyone interested in volunteering to be on the Committee, or to help set up for this event, are encouraged to contact '234'.

*Barbara Q.*

## No Crystal Ball

With the pace of change, the future is not what it used to be. From one moment to the next, no one can be certain of anything. Your job, your marriage, and your relationship to your children - none of these may be the same next year, next month, or next week.

How does one survive these changes? First, by being flexible and adaptable ready to change course at any moment. Be prepared to 'roll with the punches' and release your old attachments or current expectations.

Second, live one day at a time. Focus on the present moment. You can continue to experience peace and joy, no matter how the outer circumstances may change.

Finally, know the removal of old securities opens the way to new opportunities. Human consciousness is moving to ever-higher levels of awareness. How much easier the journey is when we flow with the process of change.

*Harry O.*