

# BETTER TIMES



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## BETTER TIMES

Published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area

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Opinions expressed in **BETTER  
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### How to reach us

Submit group news, medallions,  
other event notices, letters to the  
editor or articles to **BETTER  
TIMES** (before the 10<sup>th</sup> of the  
prior month of issue), by mail,  
fax or email. Only signed sub-  
missions with a means of contact  
will be accepted. For subscrip-  
tions call Alexx at 416-487-8110.  
Not responsible for hyperlink  
content.



## What Is Service?

- One of our three legacies
- The base of the AA triangle
- What keeps a lot of us sober
- Something fun and rewarding beyond your imagination
- All of the above

A hard question, but an easy answer. All of the above, of course. And more:

Service is fun, not a life sentence!

With so much that needs to be done, anyone wanting to get involved can jump right in. We never seem to get enough volunteers, service never gets boring, as one can always try something new. Whether it is inside or outside the Home Group makes no difference. As you grow as the result of these steps, you will have more to share with those that come next. Standing aside to let the newcomer enjoy service is the very nature of the Spirit of Rotation. Service is time well spent.

Service is promoting the

attractiveness of recovery.

We are walking Big Books, and better advertising for AA does not exist. There are no coincidences in life, and opportunities to help present themselves



daily. One just has to be patient. A person who tries and fails is infinitely better than the one that succeeds at doing nothing.

Service is about the Spirituality of Generosity.

### Service is Gratitude!

“Freely give what has been given to you” is the main principle of the 12<sup>th</sup> Step. The hard part is to convince people to share freely of the gifts they always possessed, as well as their new gifts gained from being in the AA Fellowship. People who desperately need help today, will later carry the torch of Service. These gifts can be either financial or time volunteered for direct and indirect 12<sup>th</sup> Step work. Even something as simple as going to a Meeting or phoning an AA friend to lend some compassion.

Gratitude month is here, and the envelope is in the mail as a result of the dedicated efforts of many volunteers. Your particular envelope was probably created by one very dedicated member of the Self Support Committee, who sat at 234 for 8 hours a day for three weeks, stuffing over 10,000 envelopes, mostly alone.

See Service Page 2

## 20th Anniversary Archives Breakfast

**D**usty old black and white photos of men from a bygone era ... Pieces of paper encased in plastic in oak and glass display cabinets ... A funny little red lamp with a yellowed white shade ... Six suggested proposals in the handwriting of Bill W., a co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous ... A 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 1<sup>st</sup> Printing of the ‘Big Book’ *Alcoholics Anonymous* signed by early members of A.A in Toronto and Bill W ... A tattered and worn Works Publishing copy of the 12 Traditions ... A pre-publication copy of the 12 Concepts ... What’s any of this got to do with carrying the message?

On August 6, 1981, Tom Hills, then Alternate Delegate Eastern Ontario Area 83, convened a meeting on behalf of the Ontario Provincial Committee to

discuss the development of an Archives repository: a place to gather, preserve, and protect our A.A. history. Present at this first meeting were Al Boyle, Bob Dobson, Whit Hilmer and Neil McVicar. With the exception of Bobby D., as he became so affectionately known, all had served as Ontario delegates to the General Service Conference. Over the years, the members of the committee changed as they moved, became unable, and sadly passed away. The current committee represents some of these earlier members, Bill M (Long Branch) and Albert W. (Birds of a Feather) and the general service districts of the GTA. They are in their 21<sup>st</sup> year of continuous service to the fellowship in Ontario, Toronto, and beyond.

In order to be self-support-

ing in carrying this vital piece of quiet behind the scenes work, an breakfast meeting was planned. The first breakfast was at the Howard Johnson’s at Dixon Road & Highway 27, the purpose of which was “to attempt to raise funds for the Archives Committee and to do this without obtaining any funds that are earmarked for any other purpose. Since this [was] the first attempt, it was decided to try it in the west end.” 210 people attended that 1<sup>st</sup> Breakfast and at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on November 7, 2004 at the Oasis Convention Centre the number is expected to double.

Traditionally there has been a panel of two to three speakers - women with 35+ and men with 40+ years of sobriety. The deference has been made to women

See 20th Page 4

Our little front-page mini-slogan states that "BETTER TIMES is 'Published monthly for members of the Fellowship in the Greater Toronto Area'. We cover activities and events of interest to the Fellowship, in advance whenever possible (which is why the deadline is the 10<sup>th</sup> of the previous month). We cover seasonal events such as Gratitude Month in the fall, Winter season Open House in December and the ORC in the spring. We also run 'Series' articles, covering items like the 'Twelve Steps', 'Twelve Traditions', and 'slogans'. Another 'Fun Read' is the Intergroup Report on the back page of every issue beside the monthly 'Alatoon'.

We believe these are interesting to members of the Fellowship, and show that we're an active, healthy bunch of recovering alcoholics. Our Fellowship offers opportunities for involvement, and for us, Service is "BETTER TIMES".

We also see ourselves as a

## The Editors Say...

### "Freedom of Speech", Editorial Freedom and the Intergroup Floor"

'Forum for Thought and Free Speech' about ourselves, our Fellowship and things of interest to our members. That's why the words "...for members of the Fellowship in the Greater Toronto Area" appear right upfront.

When Tom G. from North Toronto Group started BETTER TIMES in 1993/4 (it took months of startup meetings), we all wanted to be 'Trusted Servants', but we also wanted to be able to speak our own minds; and let you, the members of the Fellowship use BETTER TIMES as a Forum to speak your minds as well. After all, any Group Member, Intergroup Rep., Alternate, GSR etc. has that privilege! So we do not publish "on behalf of" Toronto Intergroup, or Districts, or Areas; or even GSO New York; although we certainly

value advice from all of them.

I remember in the first year there was a real BETTER TIMES 'Tempest in a Teapot' that had people screaming at each other on the Intergroup Floor. One of our founding committee members, Myles W. (who also was one of the founders of the Website Committee) had written an article about websites offering possible Physical and Spiritual Solace. In his usual thorough manner, he had also included a Nature Worshipping "Wiccan Website". BOOOM! We were promoting, and worse we were promoting Witchcraft!! WE WERE DEVIL WORSHIP-PERS!! This must stop!

Well, that was a stormy session; but the final point was Myles using Voltaire's famous 'Defense of Free Speech', "I dis-

approve of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it!" It was pointed out that the words, "Possibly not for everyone, but this website has some interesting ideas about Nature", had preceded the 'offending' site in the article, so we certainly were not promoting it!

It is so important to uphold the Principle of Free Speech, even when, in practice, it is difficult to do so. There's no challenge in defending someone you agree with. The stretch is standing up for your opponent, so that everyone's rights are preserved! Doesn't this sound a lot like "Principles before Personalities"?

So, If you want information in BETTER TIMES, call us, write to us, fax us, email us or drop off the information to 234. We try to all print the letters we receive, but sometimes we have to hold them or edit them for space.

Kevin M.

## THINK ! THINK ! THINK

This slogan is the start of my program of recovery from dependence and addiction to alcohol. The dictionary meaning of 'think' is, "to be of opinion, to form and entertain an idea of, to imagine to oneself, to become mentally aware of."

For me, the last meaning mentioned here depends on God's grace. I vaguely remember that, in the past, I was occasionally mentally aware of the ill effects alcohol had on me. But I was of the opinion that people and circumstances were to blame, not me. As the full mental awareness of my problem unfolded, I found I was powerless in controlling it. It seemed I had to drink to live.

I did form and entertain the idea that detox would help, and

it did. It was a sort of self-intervention. I imagined to myself, "That's enough, Ronny, take some rest now, time up for oil change and tune up." I would

imagine to myself, but this sort of autosuggestion didn't always work. Invariably, I stopped only when the brakes failed.

If Bill W. did not have the thought that there were thousands of hopeless alcoholics who might be glad to have what he had been given so freely, or did not become mentally aware of his plight at that hotel lobby and the desire to meet and talk to another drunk; remembering that that was the thing that kept him sober, I shudder to 'think' what would have happened to the millions of sober AA members today.

Yes, Think, Think, Think. But I cannot just think myself into sobriety. Action is the magic word.

Ronny H



## Service from Page 1

Now that is Service! Thank you for your dedication.

The sobriety practiced in the GTA is second to none. Our Central Office at 234 administers a wide variety of services for the suffering alcoholic. I am so grateful that I got a real voice and not an answering machine when I made THAT CALL! These services have costs that need to be covered on a regular basis, but as a Not-for Profit organization that relies solely on the donations of its' membership, we can never assume the other guy is doing his part too. Otherwise our Fellowship could falter and fail.

AA is for us, by us, and no one else picks up the tab for us. That's Tradition 7 in action. For the children born today, our hoping that AA will be there when they need it, is not enough. This is why we have Gratitude Month.

Service is both Gratitude and Actions. For newcomers, Service is also a Blank Page waiting for you to add your own colour and style. A masterpiece is waiting for you!

Jim A., D18 Chair Self Support

## Archives Alley

**N**estled in Bedford Hills in Upstate New York is a small, seven-room, Dutch Colonial structure clad in dark brown shingles. A series of stone steps dot the property and so the name Stepping Stones. It was the home of Bill and Lois W. for 23 years.

Forced from her father's home on Clinton Street in New York after the mortgage moratorium was lifted in 1939, Lois and Bill lived in 50 or so places over the next two years, mainly with AA members. Lois' entry for April 26, 1939 was: "Left 182 for good. Went to the Parkhursts". They had little source of income during this time and were literally homeless.

In 1941, a grateful friend of an AA member made them an offer they couldn't refuse. The house was offered to them for \$6500 with no down payment and \$40 mortgage payments monthly. Initially, they refused, thinking that they could not possibly afford such a beautiful home. But when it was pointed out that it was only slightly more a month than what they were paying for furniture storage, they relented. They fell in love with it the first time they saw it. Originally, it was called Bill-Lois's Break however they changed the name to imply a connection with the Twelve Steps.

The Wilson's lived in the house for the rest of their lives. Bill spent almost 30 years there until his death in January of 1971. Lois lived on for 17 years. It is now a trust foundation, preserving the history, artifacts and papers of Bill and Lois.

One of the greatest experiences of my life was to sit at the kitchen table on a visit to Stepping Stones. This was the table where Ebby T. brought the message of recovery to Bill W., and subsequently, to the world.

*Bernadette MacL.*

## Have You Heard?

### UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

**Kathy M.**, 1 yr, *Fellowship*, Oct 4.  
**Karen S.**, 5 yrs, *Fellowship*, Oct 4.  
**Kari S.**, 10 yrs, *Don Valley*, Oct 19.  
**Rita B.**, 1 yr, *Rexdale United*, Oct 21.  
**Lynn L.**, 10 yrs, *East York*, Nov 30.

### GROUP ANNIVERSARIES

**Markland Wood Group** has a group anniversary celebration on **October 21**. Good Food, Speaker, and Fellowship. *All Welcome!*

### THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE...

**Harold LeB.**, *Brentcliffe Group*, beloved husband of Mary Jess LeB., *Monday Noon Group*, passed away August 24. He was over 13 years sober.  
**John P.**, *Sunnyside Group*, beloved husband of Patricia ('Pat') P., also of the *Sunnyside Group*, passed away recently. He was over 23 yrs sober.

### MEETING CHANGES

**Steps to Sobriety ( C )** Saturdays (NORTHEAST) **DISCONTINUED for now.**  
**Brampton Bad Boys Discussion ( C )** Tuesdays (SUB NW) **now at 8 p.m.**

**Mississauga Men's Meeting ( C )** Mondays 8 p.m. (SUB WEST) **name change: 'Mississauga Mixed Meeting'** (for both men and women; still remains a closed discussion).

**Gift of Life (O)** Thursdays (NORTHWEST) **meeting at 1:30 p.m.; enter in Main entrance.**  
**Scarborough General Hospital Meeting (O)** Tuesdays 7 p.m. (NORTHEAST) **meeting now in boardroom.**

**Monday Night 5<sup>th</sup> Tradition Big Book Mtg ( C )** Mondays 8:30 p.m. (SUB WEST) **meeting starts at 7:30 p.m.**

### NEW MEETINGS

**Here and Now ( C )** Saturdays 7 p.m. (CENTRAL): St. Andrews United Church, 117 Bloor St East (upstairs), SW corner of Church and Bloor. *Non-smoking, NO PETS, please.*

**Primary Purpose Discussion Meeting ( C )** Mondays 8 p.m. (CENTRAL): Christ Church, 1570 Yonge St at Heath St, N of St Clair Ave, 1 block N of St Clair Ave subway (NW Corner).

### SPECIAL EVENTS, CONVENTIONS, and CONFERENCES

**'Miracles of Honesty' 9<sup>th</sup> Annual MISSISSAUGA FALL ROUND UP** Saturday, October 9 at St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, 3625 Cawthra Rd., Mississauga, just S of Burnhamthorpe Rd. AA and Al-Anon. \$15. (includes lunch and refreshments). For more information, contact Steve (647)888-2921 or Francis (905)279-8182. *See flyers.*

**'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).

**'Free at Last' MANITOBA KEYSTONE CONFERENCE** November 5,6,7 at the Ramada Marlborough Hotel, Winnipeg (1-800-667-7666). AA Central Office (204)942-0126. *See flyers.*

Third Annual **EAST YORK ROUNDUP**

Saturday, November 6 at St. Columba Church, 2723 St. Clair Ave East, east of O'Connor Drive. Cost: 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition at door. Doors open at 11 a.m. Opening Remarks: 12 noon. Al-Anon Family panel, Women's panel, Longtimer's Ask It Basket, Pot Luck supper, Keynote Speaker, sobriety countdown. *All Welcome!*

### 20<sup>th</sup> Annual ARCHIVES BREAKFAST

Sunday, Nov. 7 at the Oasis Convention Centre (Mississauga). Tickets \$25. Guest Speaker: Gail L., Akron AA Archivist. Tickets available 234. *See flyers.*

*\*'57 Years of AA: Spirituality\*Gratitude\*Growth*  
**District 50 Cornwall AA CONFERENCE** November 12 and 13, Ramada Inn, 805 Brookdale Ave, Cornwall. Al-Anon participation. Banquet and Dance. AA Speaker: Lee Y. (Orlando FLA). For more info: Mike L (e-mail address): [tlcvacrec@glennet.ca](mailto:tlcvacrec@glennet.ca). *See flyers.*

**'Gratitude' 51<sup>st</sup> Annual WESTERN ONTARIO CONFERENCE** November 19, 20, 21 - Hilton Hotel, London, Ontario. Spiritual Meeting, Longtimer's Panel, Institutional Panel, dances Friday and Saturday night, Banquet Saturday night. For information call Joselyn (519)451-1527 or Susan (519)474-4545. *See flyers.*

### SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

**WINTER SEASON OPEN HOUSE NEEDS MORE COOKS!!!** Due to expansion and a bigger kitchen, the Winter Season Open House Event needs **MORE VOLUNTEER COOKS** for Christmas Day 2004! Don't be a 'turkey', come out and cook one! Free dinner, too! **Call Kenny C. to volunteer (416)762-1176.**

**BETTER TIMES** needs people for the **Subscriptions/Circulation Sub-Committee.** If you go to lots of meetings in all parts of the GTA and you'd like to get involved, call 234 leave your name & # and we'll get back to you! The **BETTER TIMES** Committee meets the last Wednesday of every month @7.30 PM at 234. If you're interested in contributing - come out!

## Qu'est-ce-que vous faites ce soir?

Going to a meeting, *peut-etre?*

**D**id you know that Metro Toronto does not have a regular French Language AA meeting? What do we do to help the struggling alcoholic visiting from Montreal, Paris or Sudbury? Or the Francophone newcomer to Toronto who is also a newcomer *dans notre programme?*

If you, or anyone you know would like to get active by being involved in the creation of a French Language AA meeting, as well having as the commitment to its ongoing, continued success, please send your contact details to 234 c/o Self Support Committee. We are attempting to bring together interested members of the Fellowship for this worthy project.

*Jim A.*

*The Miracle of Intergroup*

Well, it looks like all this fuss was over nothing. Last month, I briefly commented on a motion made for Intergroup to raffle a Big Book to dig them out of the financial hole they are in. My original report actually contained some commentary on the subject, comparing this suggestion to selling newcomers to Bio-Pharmaceutical companies for scientific experiments, but the report was shortened somewhat as my comments could sway the vote. I was more than a little upset, and even convinced our Chair to focus "The Editors Say" on freedom of speech.

As usual, my self-inflicted torment was for naught. The motion was not even seconded.

In reflection, I'm not really sure why anyone is worried about finances anyway. Our financial picture pretty much the same as last year – PITIFUL – but there are signs of slight improvement (we are only \$33,500 in the hole).

## Intergroup Report



As a wrap up to this month's Intergroup update, there has been some feedback that the new style is too political, and that the strong opinions expressed are sometimes interpreted as Anti-Intergroup.

There is no greater "politics" in AA that I have witnessed than GTA Intergroup, with back-bench discussions, deals of Solidarity, and loopholing of asinine procedures being the normal practice. I have served as Intergroup Rep, Operating Committee Member and Chairperson in this quirky dysfunctional environment. That being said, I believe that Intergroup is the most important entity of AA directly affecting the GTA as a whole, and know for a fact that, against all odds, the crew that run this Operation perform nothing short of a miracle.

My reports, whether flattering or exposing, are simply the truth, as I see it.

*Gord MacK.*

I'm happy to report that we did not lose any more Operating Committee members this month, however, one member of the Finance Committee resigned, so resumes are being sought.

August was rather slow for

Chairperson, and is now looking for 'long-timers' to share their experience on tape. Grapevines can now be purchased in Spanish, and even in French, but you'd be hard pressed to find one as there are currently no French meetings in Toronto.

## Letter to the Editor

Re: "To Precoin or Not Precoin"

... It has often been said, "You have one year sobriety when you have one year and not before. The coin is neither a reward or a prize but simply a reminder to be grateful". With these two thoughts in mind, I can't help but think that 'Precoining' is just another way of watering down the program, or an easier softer way! Is it not sobriety and serenity that we seek? Or is the coin, the badge, the medal?

I have to wonder where the priorities are. The presentation of the medallion at an open meeting is really so that others can see what can be accomplished by working the AA program. ... As for the 4th Tradition, I don't think it was followed. Why wait until a person has one year, 365 days? Wouldn't 300 be enough? What about 360? By presenting the medallion before hand, what is the message that AA is sending out?

The group made the wrong decision, the member was wrong to ask, and that AA Group has

slipped a notch for sure!

But then again, do we really need medallions? It is the 'custom' around the GTA, but I understand that is not the norm everywhere in AA. There are places where a medallion is given to a member in private by their sponsor, and not by the group. There is a lot to be said about humility in that.

*Tom McN.*

## 20th from Page 1

because of the relatively few women who came into AA in the earlier years. This year the committee is excited about having Gail L. from Akron come and tell us about the birth and growth of Alcoholics Anonymous with a great presentation that should not be missed. Gail has been sober for 26 years and has been an active member of Akron AA. She has served as a member of the Akron Intergroup Board, was active in Ohio Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (OYPAA) and served as secretary and program director for two conferences held in Akron. She was involved in the early purchase of Dr. Bob's home. She is active on the Founder's Day Committee and has served

as their archivist for 20 years. She was asked in 1984 by Nell Wing to start an archives collection. Not one to refuse a challenge, she has served as the appointed archivist at the Akron Intergroup offices for ten years. She initiated the Annual Archives Workshop that was hosted in Akron for the first three years and is currently their appointed archivist.

Join us in a great morning of good food, great fellowship and an opportunity to learn more about how the message was so lovingly and selflessly carried to you and me. Oasis Convention Centre, 1036 Lakeshore Road E. Mississauga. November 7, 2004, 9:00 – 12:00. Tickets \$25.

*Maire O'B, GTA Archivist*

## KEEP COMING BACK - YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN THE MIRACLE WILL HAPPEN'

My Friend, Eddy McC. Eddy was a bum who used to drop into AA meetings to get some food, but he never tried to stay sober until one day he dropped into the Trinity Group on Sherbrooke St. in Montreal. It was some time

around 1958. No one came that night, but Eddy knew where the coffee pot was, so he put it on and sat down to wait for the members to come in. In the mean time, he started to read the Big Book. No one showed up for the meeting, and, after a while he put the coffee pot away and left.

The next week he came back and did the same thing. When he started to read the Big Book, he realized that he had been sober for a week. A couple of newcomers came in, so Eddy held a meeting and he was the Chair. Eddy never took another drink for the rest of his life, he became one of the most active members and helped countless drunks including me, to return to a sober and happy life . . . and he chaired every meeting from then on . The Group became known as "Eddy's Follies" and it became one of the biggest meetings in Montreal, but there was one rule that Eddy had and that was that you could do any job in the group but no one could ever chair the meeting because "you bastards never sobered me up, that chair did . . . the lesson here is that AA is caught not caught.

*Dan McK.*