



Contents

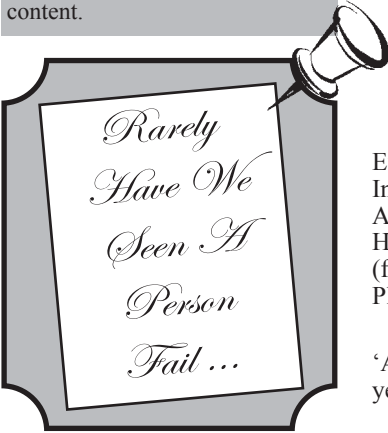
A Prescription for Sobriety 1
 "Always to BE THERE" 1
 The Editors Say 2
 Rarely Have We Seen A Person Fail .. 2
 Candlelight / Gratitude Meetings ... 2
 Archives Alley 3
 Have You Heard 3
 Intergroup Report 4
 Looking for a Meeting 4
 Should We or Shouldn't We 4

BETTER TIMES
 Published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area
 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 202
 Toronto, Ontario M4P 1K5
 Telephone: 416-487-5591
 Fax: 416-487-5855
 TTY: 416-487-5062
 E-mail: btimes@aatoronto.org
 Web: www.aatoronto.org

Editorial Committee:
 Gord MacK., (Editor) Joe C.,
 Bernadette MacL., Terry H., Jim
 H., Kevin M., Dan McK., Ed R.,
 Elizabeth S., Ron W., Alexx V.
Cartoonist: David N.

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

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



A Prescription for Sobriety

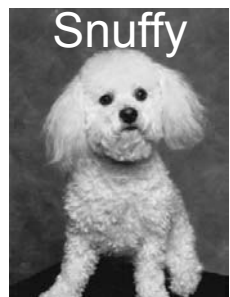
When I joined AA some five and one half years ago, I would get such a kick out of watching Charles M.'s dog Snuffy join in with the crowd and playfully bark every time there was applause in the room. Charles would give him a gentle pat. These too gave me much joy when I was emotionally and spiritually shattered, as I believe they brought to many people in the fellowship.

Charles feels extremely blessed to be sober today; recalling that almost 30 years ago, he could go through 70 ounces of liquor a day as routine. He remembered an occasion when his wife at the time had arranged for two of her friends, Jack B. and Peter T., to take him to a meeting. Afterward, Charles was determined never to return to another AA meeting again, shouting, "there's nothing here that I want."

With 40 ounces of Scotch in hand, Charles walked to the Selby Hotel on Sherbourne Street, proceeded to get drunk and drank steadily for the next 3 days. Throwing his last empty bottle across the room, he

slept, and awoke the next day craving a drink. He decided to walk home to get some cash for another bottle. Normally it took him about 45 minutes to walk, but he was staggering so badly that it took him almost 2 hours!

When he arrived, he closed the door behind him,



and he then heard a voice that stated very clearly, "You don't have to pick up a drink today." His family had deserted him over his drinking, and he felt totally isolated. His main intention was to go into the living room to get a drink, but instead, he sat down.

"God touched me on January 18th almost 30 years ago and I haven't had a drink since," Charles recalls. He called Jack B., and said very

desperately, "I need you. You've got to help me!" Jack was there in no time flat.

Charles believes Jack B. saved his life, and both Jack B. and Peter T. kept him so busy going to meetings that he didn't have time to drink – sometimes as many as four or five meetings in a day!

Charles went from a 'roaring drunk' to become a respected and active member of Alcoholics Anonymous. During the summer of 1991, he went back to university to get his "Master of Divinity" degree, and today has the credentials to be an Anglican Church Minister. He recalls that Snuffy always accompanied him at his classes, the library and even the chapel. Charles reminisced that on graduation, Snuffy too wore a graduation gown. What a clever pooch!

I had heard rumors that Snuffy was prescribed by Charles' physician, and that Charles used this prescription to allow him to take Snuffy into restaurants and other establishments. When asked about this, Charles responded modestly,

See Prescription Page 4

"Always to BE THERE?"

We all remember how the 'Responsibility Pledge' ends - "I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that I am responsible". Well this photo proves that the hand of AA can get just about anywhere these days!

Here's how it happened. Every year the Public Information Committee runs an AA Information Table at the Health Fair at the East York Mall (formerly the Thorncliffe Park Plaza).

This is one of those famous 'AA Coincidence' stories. Every year, Noreen F., Donna M. and

others from the Thorncliffe Park Group, join Alexx V. from 234 to run the Table at the Thorncliffe Plaza's Health Fair. It's always a bit of a guessing game to find our spot as we're never quite



sure where the table is going to be each year in this big plaza. We thought we'd been everywhere - until last year.

Noreen and I went traipsing into the Plaza looking for 'our spot' to set up the Public Information Display and unpack all the brochures, pamphlets and flyers that make up our veritable "Arsenal of Sobriety".

THERE our table was -right outside the LCBO!!!

Who says God doesn't have a sense of humour? The LCBO wasn't even open yet and Noreen looked at me and said, "I don't think they're going to be too happy about this". A masterful piece of understatement!

It was too late to shuffle
See 'Always' Page 4

Well, the Holidays are almost here - always an "Interesting Time" for Alcoholics. That's an old Chinese Curse, by the way - "May you live in interesting times" - meaning possibly perilous times. Perilous for Alcoholics, because in the 'Seasonal Swirl of Celebrations' the possibility of a 'Slip' is so much stronger. So we have to be on our guard and keep the 'Remember Whens' in mind.

Nobody likes to remember the disasters of the past; crying kids, screaming spouses, disastrous dinners and all that. If they can be used as a positive tool, however, to prevent future occurrences, then that's good on two fronts; good for the

"Rarely Have We Seen a Person Fail ..."

An interesting phrase chosen to complete our understanding of the Second Step, don't you think? The first paragraph of Chapter Five "How It Works" cuts to the chase, underlining the importance of abandoning the self-centered control I proclaim once and for all.

The most important thing I have learned about Chapter Five is that there are Four Chapters and The Doctor's Opinion preceding it. By examining those, I have learned what alcoholism is, what the problem is, and what the solution is. I understand why I am the way I am, and why an answer to my dilemma has been so difficult to see. I can see that I am not alone, and mine is not a unique case. I have, by reading to this point, seen that I MUST be open-minded in spiritual theories, contrary to all things I have considered or believed in my life.

The choice now, it seems, is mine.

Should I "thoroughly follow" the path laid before me, "completely give" myself to the Program, and develop "a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty", I WILL RECOVER. If not, I will be one of the "unfortunates", who will, for one reason or another, simply never quite get it.

I could be a 'Can Not', with

The Editors Say...

The Holidays are ALMOST Here!

members of the Fellowship (God, I don't want to do THAT again!) AND for their family members, who are either supportive of the Alcoholics own efforts; or often 'making an effort' themselves to recognize relationships in this Festive period.

Sure it's tough and we all need a little extra support during this period. That's why we try to tell you about all the things that are going on in the Fellowship over the Holidays,

things like Group Christmas Party meetings (everybody welcome!), Candlelight Meetings, Christmas Eve Meetings (you can show up at Winter Season Open House on Christmas Eve and help set up! Come on Christmas Day for Fun, Fellowship AND Food!) And there's the Oasis Club 'Marathon of Hope' - Twelve Step Meetings every two hours on December 24th, 25th and 26th, the Spiritual New Years Eve & Dance at Holy Rosary Parish Hall @ St. Clair West Subway Station. There's LOTS of support out there!

Good thing, because we

ALL have to stay sober so we can show up for the World Conference 2005 Volunteer Signup Meeting on January 23rd at 11.30 AM at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre - Show Up and Sign Up!

Remember, a good example can be the best example; and to set one in this perilous period makes a BIG difference - because those who see it are often those who saw exactly the opposite in the past. This is part of the Promise of Change - and we CAN do it. So certainly there is Peril during the Holiday Season, but there is also Promise - the Promise of a better life and **BETTER TIMES** for all.

Best Wishes for a Safe, Sober and Happy Holiday Season!

Kevin M.

Candlelight / Gratitude Meetings

- **Midtown Group** Candlelight DEC.16 (CENTRAL)
- **Thorncliffe Park Group** Candlelight DEC.17 (CENTRAL)
- **Newcomers** Candlelight DEC.17 (EAST)
- **Saturday Noon** Gratitude DEC.18 (CENTRAL)
- **Saturday 2 pm** Scott Mission Gratitude DEC.18 (CENTRAL)
- **Step Stop** (10:30 a.m.) Gratitude DEC.18 (EAST)
- **Lansing Group** Candlelight DEC.18 (NORTH)
- **Church Street Group** Holiday Party DEC.18 (CENTRAL)
- **High Park Group** Candlelight DEC.19 (WEST)
- **Church Street Group** Candlelight DEC.19 (CENTRAL)
- **Keep it Simple Group** Candlelight DEC.19 (EAST)
- **Bellamy Group** Candlelight DEC.20 (NORTHWEST)
- **Six Points Group** Gratitude DEC.20 (WEST)
- **Westmoreland Group** Candlelight DEC.21 (CENTRAL)
- **Wexford Group** Candlelight DEC.21 (NORTHEAST)
- **Agincourt Acorn Group** Candlelight DEC.21 (NORTHEAST)
- **Don Valley Group** Candlelight DEC.21 (NORTH)
- **Unionville Group** Candlelight DEC.22 (SUB.NE)
- **Hill Group** Candlelight DEC.23 (CENTRAL)
- **New Anchor Group** Candlelight DEC.23 (EAST)
- **Rox Glen Traditional** Candlelight DEC.23 (CENTRAL)

Bible Gord

Archives Alley

Over the years, discussion has arisen regarding the use of the Lord's Prayer at the close of our AA meetings. In the early years this was not an issue, but AA's philosophy of "the God of your own understanding" brought it into question.

In the late fifties, when Bill W. was asked this question, he answered the controversy in the form of a letter, which was published in the Grapevine. One of the points made was his explanation of how the prayer came to be recited at the end of the meeting. That practice being that of the Oxford Group and its huge influence in the early days of AA.

To those who raised the question of its use and questioned its value, Bill stated: "it is sometimes complained that the Lord's Prayer is a Christian document. Nevertheless this Prayer is of such widespread use and recognition that the arguments of its Christian origin seems to be a little far-fetched. It is also true that most AAs believe in some kind of God and that communication and strength is obtainable through His grace. Since this is the general consensus it seems only right that at least the Serenity Prayer and the Lord's Prayer be used in connection with our meetings. It does not seem necessary to defer to the feelings of our agnostic and atheist newcomers to the extent of completely hiding our light under a bushel."

And to make a further point he added: "However, around here, the leader of the meeting usually asks those to join him in the Lord's Prayer who feel that they would care to do so. The worst that happens to the objectors is that they have to listen to it. This is doubtless a salutary exercise in tolerance at their stage of progress."

Bernadette MacL.

Have You Heard?

UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Arvil H., 15 years, *Lighthouse*, Dec.17
Hughey D., 10 years., Scarborough, Dec 17
Catherine B., 5 years, *Lakeshore*, Dec.19
Barbara D., 5 years, *Bayview*, Jan.1
Romana K., 10 years, *Bayview*, Jan.2
Barbara Q., 10 years, *Rexdale United*, Jan.6
Derl D. & Gaby P., both 10 years, *Spiritual Progress*, both celebrating Jan.8
Bill Y., 35 years, *Rexdale United*, Jan.13
Rick P., 10 years, *Spiritual Progress*, Jan.15
David S., 20 years, *Glenholme*, Jan.17
Dennis M., 5 years, *Rexdale United*, Jan.20
Charles M., 30 years, *St. Jamestown*, Jan.23
Bob S., 20 years, *Glenholme*, Jan.31
Rita S., 10 years, *Brampton New Life*, April 4

GROUP ANNIVERSARIES

Saturday Noon Meeting (CENTRAL) celebrates **25 years of service** on Jan.8.
Six Points Group (WEST) Jan.10.

MEETING CHANGES: Please contact 234 for most recent information. (Info not printed in this month's Newsletter in order to allow space for Holiday Announcements)

SPECIAL EVENTS, CONVENTIONS, AND CONFERENCES

28th Annual SPIRITUAL NEW YEAR'S EVE & DANCE Fri. Dec.31 at Holy Rosary Parish Hall, 354 St Clair Ave West at Bathurst (St Clair west subway station). Parking in rear of hall (enter drive on west side). Doors open at 9 p.m. 9:30 p.m. – 11 p.m.: AA meeting in Main Auditorium. 11:30 enter adjoining church for Candlelight Interfaith Gratitude Service, to be followed by a Pot Luck Buffet and Dance. **Tickets \$10 in advance; \$12 at the door. Ticket information, call John P. (416) 698-0395.** Food Donations (Casseroles, Cold Cuts, Cheese and Crackers, Desserts, etc.) appreciated. **Volunteers for this committee needed and welcome! Contact 234 for details. Watch for 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. MUSICAL VOLUNTEERS ARE ALSO NEEDED!** Anybody with musical talent, please call Tom S. (416)461-8356, or call 234 (416)487-5591. **Come and Share a Great Day!!!**

The Intergroup Administrative Office at 234 Eglinton Ave. E and the **Literature Department WILL BE CLOSED** for the Holidays from **FRIDAY, DEC.24 until MONDAY, Jan. 3. NO LITERATURE SALES** will occur during this period. The office will **reopen on TUESDAY, Jan.4.** **Phone lines will be open and operational over the Holiday Season.**

Regent Park Christmas Dinner - December

25th, 2004 - 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. - Sacre Coeur Church, 381 Sherbourne Street, just north of Carlton. Volunteers are needed on the 24th for set up and 25th for serving. AA meetings at 9:30, 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. Come and join us for a memorable day of fellowship and gratitude.

Holiday Meeting Announcements

The following is a list of meeting openings and cancellations over the Holidays. If your group wishes to announce information for the 'Intergroup Office (phones), please call 416-487-5591.

Glenholme Group (CENTRAL) OPEN Mon. Dec.27 and Mon. Jan.3

Frontrunners Group (CENTRAL) CANCELLED Sat. Dec.25 and Sat. Jan.1
Noon Meetings at the Sanctuary (CENTRAL) OPEN Thurs Dec.23 and 30, Fri. Dec 24 and 31, Sat. Dec.25 and Jan.1, Sun. Dec.26 and Jan.2. *Watch for flyers.

Friday Women's Discussion (WEST) CANCELLED Fri. Dec.24; OPEN Fri. Dec.31

Melrose Group (WEST) CANCELLED Sat. Dec.25; OPEN Sat. Jan.1

MARATHON MEETINGS at the Metro Oasis Club (EAST) round the clock starting at noon Fri.Dec.24, Sat. Dec.25 and ending on Sun.Dec.26 at 6 p.m. Meetings every 2 hours. *Watch for flyers. Call 234 for details.

Restoration and Recovery Group (SUB.WEST) OPEN Fri. Dec 24, Fri. Dec.31; Tues. Dec 21, Tues. Dec.28

Saturday Morning Disc. Group (EAST) CANCELLED Sat. Dec.18, 25, and Sat. Jan.1

High Park Group (WEST) OPEN Fri. Dec.24, Sun. Dec.26, Fri. Dec.31, and Sun. Jan.1

Saturday Noon Meeting (CENTRAL) OPEN Dec.25

Park Royal Group (SUB.WEST) OPEN Thurs Dec.23, Mon.dec.27, Thurs. Dec.30 and Mon.Jan.3

Traditional Group (NORTH) OPEN Fri. Dec.24 and Fri.Dec.31

Lansing Group (NORTH) OPEN Dec.25
Meadowvale South Group (SUB.WEST) OPEN Dec.25

Church Street Group (CENTRAL) OPEN Sun.Dec.26, Sat. Jan.1, and Sun.Jan.2. NO MEETINGS Dec.25

Rainbow Group (CENTRAL) CANCELLED Fri. Dec.24 and Fri. Dec.31

Living in Today Meeting (CENTRAL) CANCELLED Thurs. Dec.30

Parkdale Sunday Morning Meeting (WEST) CANCELLED Sun. Dec.26 and Jan.2

Friendship Room Meeting (CENTRAL) OPEN Fri. Dec.24 and Dec.31

All Hope Group (EAST) CANCELLED Sat. Dec.25 and Jan.1

Eventide Meeting (CENTRAL) OPEN Sun.Dec.26 and Jan.2

Noon Rap Group (CENTRAL) CANCELLED Wed. Dec.15, Fri.Dec.24, Mon.Dec.27, Fri.Dec.31, Mon.Jan.3

Steps to Sobriety (EAST) OPEN Dec.25

Keep it Simple (EAST) OPEN Dec. 26

Intergroup Report

Happy Holidays!

Toronto Intergroup held their semi-annual 'Show and Tell' session in November, consisting of a few Happy Committee Chairpersons sharing some Happy Thoughts about

Happy Committees.

It will be 'Business as Usual' next month, when we will once again bring you our Happy Report. How's that for concise, positive and proactive?

Gord MacK.

Looking For A Meeting? Here's A Whole Bunch!

The 'Holiday Twelve Step Marathon of Recovery' at Metro Oasis Club

Many Groups don't operate during the Christmas period, from the 24th through the 26th, as many of the churches where we hold our meetings are busy with celebrations for their own Parishes. This can present a problem for Alcoholics in the Fellowship who feel the need for a meeting during this 'perilous period', and **BETTER TIMES** publishes many December Events and Activities in 'Have You Heard' so people have somewhere to go. This is especially important for Newcomers to the Fellowship, who may be more alone at Christmas than others.

There are also those who have the 'Final Blowup and Bottoming Out' at Christmas. I was one of them, sitting alone in the City, wondering why I wasn't up in Ski Country entertaining old friends, or going to dinners and parties. I sat there drinking Cognac, staring at the walls, watching the snow fall and wondered how the Hell it had all gone wrong and what I should do.

I didn't know WHAT to do, or WHERE to go. When I finally sobered up, I remembered my friend Joe who'd joined AA a while back. I called him, walked into the North Toronto Group feeling like Hell, and that's the reason my Dry Date is January

Prescription from Page 1

"Yes, albeit the story might be a little exaggerated."

In closing, I wonder, if there will be an air of spirituality in the room at Charles' 30-year Medallion on the eve of January 23rd, will we hear the distant whisper of a dog's

2nd!

That's why I think it's important to let people know what's available when they need some support.

For the last ten years the Metro Oasis Club, at 921 Donlands Ave. (near Donlands Subway Station, just West of Donlands on the South side of Danforth) has been providing the space for an Annual 'Marathon of Recovery'. These are Holiday Season Twelve Step Meetings, running every two hours as long as people are there. Their Twelve Step Meetings start at Noon on Friday, December 24th, and will continue right through Christmas Day and on into Boxing Day (Sunday December 26th). Their flyer promises 'Fun, Fellowship and a Good Time will be had by all during this Festive Season'.

They say they offer 'A Safe Haven' in tough times, and this Christmas, it's another place to go during the Holiday Season. They offer fun, fellowship, food and Twelve Step Meetings during that key Christmas period when so many other Groups may be closed.

This certainly sounds like a Good Idea to me, and much better than sitting at home, staring at the walls and the snow, drinking and wondering WHAT to do!

For more information, call (416) 461-7739 or call 234.

Kevin M.

voice playfully echoing amongst the applause. Charles, in your own words; you too are needed, wanted and loved. Thank you for your devotion to the newcomer and your commitment to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Irene H. St. Jamestown Group



Always from Page 1

tables around - we checked and they'd all been allocated, so we just set up and got on with it. On the stroke of 10.00 a.m. the LCBO opened and a very worried-looking LCBO Manager came out and asked just what the Hell was going on? We explained to him that we weren't "picketing his store or trying to drive him out of business", and that we were a legitimate part of the Health Fair every year. It was just 'the luck of the draw' where we had been assigned!

Well, we told him that we wouldn't bang tambourines, sing Temperance Songs or anything like that; but I think he knew that he was going to have a major dip

in his sales while we were out there! So we moved the table over a little bit. He got a LOT happier after that!

Noreen and I even suggested he could 'send us some business' so to speak by sending anybody that they refuse to serve right over to us. Now that's Convenience Marketing - One Stop Shopping! He said he'd definitely seen a few people who could use our services. Noreen lives at Thorncliffe and she said she'd seen them too.

Anyway, we co-existed during the Health Fair - talk about 'Strange Bedfellows'! Thanks Noreen for carrying the message right to the doors of the LCBO!

Kevin M

Should we or Shouldn't We?

"For those who will, could we close this meeting with the Lord's Prayer?"

To many of us alcoholics these words provide a window of opportunity; a chance to make a connection with our fellow members; a chance to feel part of a group.

The essence of the AA program of recovery implores the adoption of the 'We' concept. The Steps and Traditions are written in this form. Prior to the program, we tried to do things our own way and experienced the bankruptcy that self-seeking invariably produces. We lost touch with God, our fellows, and ultimately ourselves.

The Lord's Prayer is part of the AA program at most meetings; it is a model on 'how to pray' which is a separate issue

than 'what to pray'. When we pray together we are instructed to send our message collectively. We pray in unison, with each other, for each other. Our message is one. The words I, me, and myself do not belong.

To those who refrain from participating in this part of the meeting, we can understand their objection to the content of what we recite. We respect their choice and don't think any less of them for it. In fact we admire their loyalty to their convictions.

Perhaps there may be a better way to end our meetings. Whatever that may be, let's hope it maintains the spirit of togetherness.

Here's to holding hands, after all for some of us that's all that kept us coming back.

Ron W.