

# BETTER TIMES



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**BETTER TIMES**  
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 Submit group news, medallions,  
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**CONCEPT 4**  
*At all responsible levels,  
 we ought to maintain a  
 traditional "Right of  
 Participation," allowing a  
 voting representation in  
 reasonable proportion to  
 the responsibility that  
 each must discharge.*

## International Conventions - Why Bother?

**W**e are now just three short months away from the 2005 International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous. This three-day event takes place in the combined facilities of the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, the SkyDome, the converted Roundhouse, and the entire grounds outside these buildings. In addition, meetings will be held at nearby hotels.

- The activities during the Convention include:
- A Thursday Night Dance and Party
  - 200+ Topic Meetings on Friday and Saturday
  - Dances Friday and Saturday evening
  - Marathon meetings in English, Spanish and French
  - The Friday Night Opening Ceremony and Flag March

in the SkyDome

- Big Meetings in the SkyDome on Saturday night and Sunday morning

This is an experience that most of us have been waiting for with anticipation and excitement. However, I've heard some of you ask, "why bother?", "what will I get from the Convention that I can't get at my local meetings?". Others say "the \$115.00 registration fee is too high a price for a few AA meetings".

In response, let's review a bit of history of the International Conventions. In 1945, a 'Big Meeting' in Cleveland showed that AA members wanted and welcomed a chance to get together to celebrate sobriety. From 1950 to 2000, the average attendance at International Conventions exceeded 25,000.

For the past four Conventions (1985 – 2000), the average has grown to 49,000 showing that, as AA grows, so does enthusiasm for Conventions. So far, 30,000 members have pre-registered for 2005. Since 90% of these pre-registrations are from outside of Canada, it shows that A.A members feel that the cost of registration, transportation and lodging as well as the time and travel are well worth it.

The purpose of an International Conventions is:

To provide opportunities for rededication of attendees to the primary purpose of AA

To enable attendees to witness the success of the AA program around the world

To let the world know that AA is alive, flourishing and

*See International Page 2*

## "Crying Wolf" ?

**M**any of us find Toronto Intergroup to be much like the boy who cried Wolf. For years, we've heard the urgent cries of "Deficit, Poverty, Bankruptcy and Money, Money, Money". These desperate cries for more revenue have never been matched by corresponding spending cuts. If my business had been floundering since the late 1990's. To quote the fantastic news of Chapter Two, There Is A Solution. A \$50,000 one. There is some pain involved, so please fetch a bullet to bite down on.

Let's run the 2006 Ontario Regional Conference at a profit. We have made profits in the past, so let's plan for it.

Part One – Increased Revenues. New registration fee is \$40.00. Before we instantly dismiss this as prohibitive,

consider the 50,000 people paying triple this to attend the 2005 International Convention. I don't like the price either, but I'm going. Most who can't pay this also have a problem with \$26.00, and more of us who are able can dig a little deeper to donate a badge. Based on approximate figures, this would generate between \$30,000 and \$42,000 surplus.

Part Two – Decrease Expenses. Here is an opportunity for Committee members and Service Giants to be heroic. We know you work hard and selflessly. In more normal times, a free room and a few dinners is small compensation for your hard work. In these harsher times we implore you to forego all perks in 2006, and perform your service work for its own rewards ONLY! No room, no dinners, etc., Local speakers and panelists should

expect the same, reserving the perks for out of town speakers only (this is where we should NOT skimp).

If the satisfaction of service is truly not contingent on perks, we will only lose a few. We must remember the severity of the current situation, or are we just hearing more cries of Wolf again. By enacting, particularly in the expense-cutting portion of this plan, I can almost guarantee that an ancillary effect will follow – more group contributions. Your "Crisis of Confidence" will be over. We will be convinced.

"Many of us exclaimed, 'What an order! I can't go through with it.'" That would be a damned shame.

*Bob K., New Anchor*

*Got an opinion? Let us know!*

The International Convention will soon be a reality, and while there is the normal hype promoting this auspicious occasion, there are many rumors circulating regarding the International Conference that caused me to dig a little deeper.

The main theme of these rumours centres, not surprisingly, about money. I think it is safe to assume that the \$115.00 individual price tag for the event, compared to the under \$30.00 standard of our annual ORC, was the primary contributor to the speculation.

A common rumor is that this gala is going to generate an enormous amount of profit, and that is very doubtful. Sources have said that the break even point is going to be approximately 42,000 attendees, and with an

## The Editors Say...

### Dispelling the Myths

estimated 50,000 expected and the experience that things tend to go over budget, that seems a fair mark to aim at with a comfortable margin for error.

The theory that anyone would be lining their pockets is, or course, ludicrous. The one that funds will be directed to first class parties and living conditions for elite volunteers also goes beyond exaggeration. I've worked on an ORC Committee, and while there are some "perks" that come with the job, there are legitimate reasons for meals and rooms which are provided. You cannot leave the hotel as you are

on call at all times. Other than the ones you are privileged enough to Chair, you miss most of the meetings because you're too busy working. You eat on the run. The only "party" I can recall, other than the Banquet which you pay for like everyone else, is a Speaker's Welcome on Friday night which allows you to eat some fresh fruit and cheese for an hour or so.

Another popular misconception is that Intergroup is being drained of much needed funds as a result of the Convention. Maps, extra phone lines, and any other expenses

incurred by Intergroup in support of the Convention will be categorically paid for by the International Convention Committee.

Despite these and other misguided rumours, I know most members are looking forward to the International Convention like a six-year-old boy anticipating St. Nick's arrival on Christmas Eve. The reality of gossip is people generally need something to complain about, and when the chips are down, people need someone to blame.

An long-timer once said that Rumors, Gossip and Myths would be the death of AA. I don't believe that is the case, for AA; being strongly focused on the primary purpose of one alcoholic helping another alcoholic, it can withstand the mightiest of Nay Sayers.

So just relax and enjoy the ride.

*Gord MacK.*

## By the Book

### Defects and Shortcomings

I was at a meeting the other day, and the subject was spirituality, and one member shared "...I had a spiritual experience that removed the obsession to drink from that day to this...it's quite a thing to one day be so full of despair that each day is its own private hell and in the space of a few seconds have all that reversed...but it happened to me and I've seen it happen to many of us..."

I remember arriving at the doors of AA, apprehensive, and sure that I was too far gone for any help from within, and soon after walking into the rooms, having this feeling of hope explode within me... that maybe, just maybe this thing might work for me. Today, that is one of the attractions for me; to see the eyes of the newcomer sparkle to life as the realization hits that this program can probably work for them as well.

In a similar vein, coming to this program, having spent long hours trying to find the armadillo in the beer label as a sole intellectual pursuit, I was often puzzled and confused by some of the words in our "beginners book" Alcoholics

Anonymous.

Case in point – Steps 6 and 7: One encourages me to be entirely ready to have God remove my defects of character; the next step tells me to ask God to remove my shortcomings.

Why are there two words there? Are they different?

Bill W., when asked this very question, in an article to the Grapevine stated categorically that the two words meant exactly the same thing.

The Oxford Dictionary confirms this:

Defect – "Lack of something essential to completeness, shortcoming, failing."

Shortcoming – "Failure to come up to standard; defect."

So if the words mean exactly the same thing, then why not use the same word in both steps, and avoid the confusion? The answer lies not in the AA program, but rather in the rules of writing which dominated the publishing world at the time the book was written.

It was considered bad form to use the same word repeatedly in a single paragraph, and writers of the time

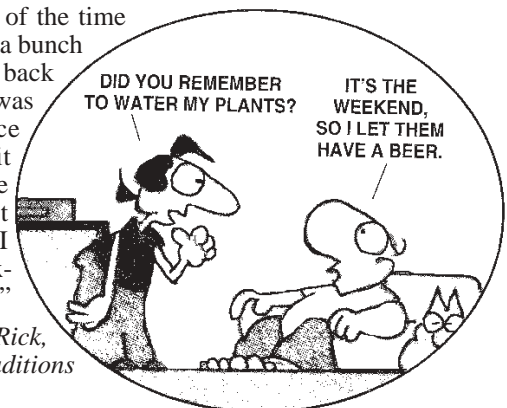
were encouraged to find an alternative word so that the passage was a more interesting read. So the use of the different words is one of writing styles, as dictated by publishing houses, rather than indicating different aspects of the disease.

On a side note: Bible Gord recently mentioned another word "brainstorm" and used the following definition from an online dictionary – "A sudden, violent disturbance of the mind."

Looking the same word up in the definitive Oxford, one finds a much darker description – "Temporary mental upset marked by uncontrolled emotion & violent action."

Reminds me of the time I had a fight with a bunch of cartons in the back of the truck I was driving. Space does not permit me to tell the details, but rest assured "I showed them boxes who was boss!"

*Dictionary Rick,  
12 Traditions*



### International from Page 1

available as a community resource, locally and internationally.

In summary, attendance at an International Convention will help us all to celebrate what we have received with other members and to show the world what we have achieved. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Watch the May issue of BETTER TIMES for more news on the big event.

*Barry W. Chair,  
Toronto 2005 Local Host  
Committee  
[www.toronto2005.ca](http://www.toronto2005.ca)*

## Archives Alley

**AA** has much for which to thank the medical profession. One of the most respected doctors in AA's history was Dr. William Duncan Silkworth. He was appropriately named "The Little Doctor Who Loved Drunks". Few doctors were as revered as he.

Dr. Silkworth graduated from Princeton in 1896 and received his medical degree from New York University in 1900. He interned at Bellevue where he discovered his gift of relating to alcoholics. During the First World War, he was on the psychiatric staff of the U.S. Army hospital in Plattsburg, N.Y., followed by several years at the Neurological Institute of Presbyterian Hospital in N.Y. In 1929, he lost his life savings and went to Towns hospital to work with alcoholics.

The white-haired man, short of stature with the twinkling blue eyes, made many indispensable contributions to AA, not the least of which was to believe in Bill W.'s white light experience. One disparaging word from him might have changed the course of AA's history. Instead he inspired a faith that grew to change the lives of countless alcoholics.

In the Big Book, first published in April of 1939, Dr. Silkworth wrote 'The Doctor's Opinion'. It was not until the second edition was published in 1955 that the good doctor penned his authorship. When alcoholism was perceived as a willful and deliberate vice, Dr. Silkworth, as director of medical services of Towns Hospital in New York City, believed in the fundamental goodness of the alcoholic. He understood that they drank compulsively and against their will.

Dr. Silkworth died of a heart attack at his home in New York in the early morn of March 22nd, 1951. Due to his personal modesty and disarming gentleness, his greatness was often disguised. Only in hindsight was his amazing medical and spiritual healing truly understood.

*Bernadette McL.*

## Have You Heard?

Weston Rd. *See flyers.*

### Special Events, Conventions, and Conferences

18<sup>th</sup> Annual Brampton 'Living in Sobriety Together' **SPRINGATHON 2005** Saturday, April 2 at Loafers Lake Recreation Centre, 30 Loafers Lake Lane, Brampton. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Registration \$15 (hot and cold buffet provided at Noon). Great Speakers: AA, Al-Anon, and young Al-Anon. Contact: [springathon2005@rogers.com](mailto:springathon2005@rogers.com) or <http://www.springathon.com>. *See flyers.*

54<sup>th</sup> Annual **MIRACLES RALLY** "Never Alone Again" in VICTORIA, BC at the Da Vinci Centre April 8, 9, & 10. Contact Eric (250)385-8329, Nick (250)595-7812 or contact [corrine4@shaw.ca](mailto:corrine4@shaw.ca).

39<sup>th</sup> Annual **NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO AREA 85 ROUNDUP** "A Daily Reprieve" May 6, 7, and 8, 2005 at the Victoria Inn, 555 West Arthur Street, Thunder Bay, ON. 1-877-VIC-INNS or contact committee at P.O. Box 10073, Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6T6.

**INFORMATION AA DAY 2005** "Service: A Path to Serenity" Saturday, May 14, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. **NEW LOCATION:** Walmer Road Baptist Church, 188 Lowther Ave., Walmer Road at Lowther (location of the Midtown Group), a short walk from Spadina Subway station (Bloor St and Spadina). Event is co-sponsored by the service districts of the GTA and GTA Intergroup. **Location is fully accessible!** Day will include panels, speakers, a pot luck lunch, and Fellowship. An address by the Area 83 Delegate and a GSO speaker will be featured. Cost is \$5. *Watch for flyers.* For tickets, see your group rep or contact 234.

15<sup>th</sup> Annual **MIDLAND & AREA ONE-DAY ROUNDUP** "The Road to Freedom" Saturday, May 14, 2005 at the Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre, 175 Yonge St., Midland, Ontario. For tickets, call Ralph 705-529-8009 or Barb 705-549-4234.

**TORONTO 2005 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION** "I Am Responsible" June 30 to July 3, 2005 at various locations in Toronto (see story page one). Information, registration and Volunteer Info can be found at [www.toronto2005.ca](http://www.toronto2005.ca)

6<sup>th</sup> Annual Sober Sailors **EUROPEAN BIG BOOK STUDY** September 24 to October 1, 2005 with Joe McC., Tulsa OK and Charlie P., Maysville AR. For more info: [Meetings\\_en\\_Route@mail.vresp.com](mailto:Meetings_en_Route@mail.vresp.com).

### Upcoming Medallions

**Scott**, 1 yr. *Bellamy*, Apr 3.  
**Roy L.** 30 yrs, *Sunday Northwestern*, April 10.  
**Jan**, 10 yrs., *Scarborough Centenary*, April 14.  
**Wilf**, 15 yrs., *Scarborough Centenary*, Apr 21.  
**Mike N.**, 25 yrs, *New Anchor*, April 14.  
**George H.**, 10 yrs, *Anniversary*, April 20.  
**Nick P.**, 1 yr, *Don Valley*, April 26.

### Meeting Changes

**New Anchor Group** (EAST) Tuesdays at 8:30 p.m.: The format for one of our meetings has changed – we now offer a Big Book Discussion, Newcomers '123' and a **CLOSED TOPIC DISCUSSION**.

**N.E.W. (Nothing Else Worked) Group** (SUBURBAN NW) Thursdays: format changed to **closed discussion**.

**Friends of Bill and Bob Meeting at York University** (NORTHWEST) Mondays: **location change** to McLaughlin College, room 109.

**Long Branch Group** (WEST) Mondays at 8 p.m.: **Location change** (due to renovations) **for the next three months** – Mimico Presbyterian Church, 119 Mimico Avenue at Royal York Road.

**Brampton-Bramalea Noon Group** (SUBURBAN NW) 12 noon: meetings Monday, Wednesday, and Friday **DISCONTINUED**.

### New Meetings

**Redwood Square Open Discussion** (SUBURBAN WEST): **Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m.** at Salvation Army Building, 750 Redwood Square (corner of Redwood Square and South Service Rd. W, 2 blocks west of Fourth Line). Wheelchair accessible.

**Thursday Night Mens Meeting** (O / C) (EAST): **Thursdays at 8 p.m.** at Waverley Road Baptist Church, 129 Waverley Rd. just north of Queen St. East. Open meeting, followed by closed discussion. Wheelchair accessible.

**Courage To Change Discussion Meeting** (C) (SUBURBAN NW): **Fridays at 7:30 p.m.** at St. Marys Church, 66 – A Main Street South, BRAMPTON (across from Gage Park). Step & Tradition Study. Last Friday of the month a Big Book Study.

### Meetings Needing Support

**PARKDALE SUNDAY MORNING MEETING** Sundays 11 a.m. WEST. Needs support in the form of Chairpersons, Speakers, Steering Committee volunteers, and general attendance. Contact Sean (416)516-9769 if you can be of help. *See flyers.*

**MOUNT DENNIS GROUP** Thursdays 8 p.m. WEST. 71 Guestville Ave, S of Eglinton, W of

**L**ynn B. used some words that gave me reason to consult my online dictionary this month.

**Acrimony** – Bitter and sharp animosity.

**Pontificating** – Expressing opinions in an arrogant and authoritative manner.

**Watershed** – A critical point marking division or change.

All in the name of opining that support for GTA Intergroup has been slipping over the past five years (which will be the only topic I will discuss this month).

Overcoming this goes beyond the concept of “Unity”, and is testament to a growing “Apathy” our fellowship has developed through induction of poisonous myths like “This is a selfish program” and “Take care of YOU first”.

Perhaps a subject more suited for an editorial, this point is contained within the Intergroup Report to cite this specific example of the result obtained by AA some membs carrying the wrong message for decades. In this case, repairing the damage cannot be done with a dictionary, a Service Manual, Guidelines or an education in Unity. A Big Book, however, would help enormously.

As for the “consensus” of a Group (who apparently refuse to read the BETTER TIMES, and will take no

## Intergroup Report The Selfish Truth



offence) that Intergroup needs to “tighten their belts”, I submit a challenge. Rent an office, somewhere centrally located within the GTA, with enough space for meetings, book storage, telephone call center and general office administration. Staff it with at least one person, notwithstanding the book department should pay for itself. Set up five phone lines: two for the office and three for your Help Line. Now, use this office to “answer the call” of any suffering alcoholic. Assist a dozen or so Committees, financially and logistically, in carrying the message (which is

your mandate as well) to places like prisons, hospitals, shut-ins and the public at large. Distribute literature to those in need. Organize coordination between the 250 or so factions of your cause around the city. Act as a liaison between these factions and your head office in New York. Expect a bit of help, but not much. Generally, less than 40% of these factions will even care you exist, and of that, less than 10% of their membership will contribute in any way. Now comes the clincher – do all of this for less than \$500.00 a day?

Someone is doing some

forward thinking. The Finance Committee reported three new items available for ten dollars each; a Souvenir Pin, Key Chain and Medallion, all commemorating the 2005 International Convention. We need more good ideas like that.

Perhaps many of you may agree with the statement that the aforementioned is nothing but “negative counseling”, and that only positive encouragement will be useful in solving this problem. While I agree the “bitter, sharp and often arrogant” tone of the Intergroup Report has done nothing to help this cause; that is not what the purpose of it is. The Intergroup Report is here to tell you what’s going on, and right now, that’s a pretty negative topic.

But you’re right in one respect. Positive encouragement is exactly what is needed – the positive encouragement that can only come from our Big Book. This will start, not at Business Meetings or Service Days, but in Meetings of Recovery. This “Time of Change” happened years ago when someone first described the Program as “Selfish”. Members should be challenged to find where in the Big Book this is written (for nowhere in the book does it say that) and point out the line from page 89, “To be helpful is our only aim.”

Gord MacK.

### GREATER TORONTO AREA INTERGROUP MONTHLY BOARDROOM BOOKINGS FOR SUBCOMMITTEES

## APRIL 2005

\*Subcommittees meet at the Intergroup Office (234 Eglinton Ave E, Suite 202) unless indicated otherwise.

|              |  |              |  |
|--------------|--|--------------|--|
| Fri. Apr 1   | TWELFTH STEP . . . . . 6:30 pm                           | Mon. Apr 18  | PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE . . . . . 7:30 pm     |
| Mon. Apr 4   | 2005 Convention Intergroup Liaison Cte . . . . . 5:30 pm | Tues. Apr 19 | FINANCE COMMITTEE . . . . . 4:30 pm                |
|              | *SELF-SUPPORT COMMITTEE . . . . . 7:30 pm                |              | OPERATING COMMITTEE . . . . . 7:30 pm              |
|              | *possible time change to 7 pm (call 234 for update)      | Wed. Apr 20  | BETTER TIMES NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE . 7:30 pm        |
| Fri. Apr 8   | ARCHIVES COMMITTEE . . . . . 7:30 pm                     | Thur. Apr 21 | TREATMENT FACILITIES COMMITTEE . . . . . 7:30 pm   |
| Sat. Apr 9   | WEBSITE COMMITTEE . . . . . 1:00 pm                      | Mon. Apr 25  | INFORMATION AA DAY COMMITTEE . . . . . 7:30 pm     |
| Mon. Apr 11  | CPC COMMITTEE . . . . . 7:00 pm                          |              | Meeting will be held at 234 from now on            |
| Wed. Apr 13  | CORRECTIONS COMMITTEE . . . . . 7:30 pm                  | Tues. Apr 26 | MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING . . . . . 8:00 pm          |
| Thur. Apr 14 | GRAPEVINE COMMITTEE . . . . . 7:00 pm                    |              | of GTA Intergroup – at Glebe Rd. United Church     |
| Sun. Apr 17  | ACCESS ABILITY COMMITTEE . . . . . 11:00 am              |              | 20 Glebe Rd. East (N of Davisville subway station) |
|              | Monthly PHONE TRAINING SESSION . . . . . 1:30 pm         | Fri. Apr 29  | TWELFTH STEP COMMITTEE . . . . . 6:30 pm           |