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Is your group having a gratitude or candlelight meeting this holiday season?

Send us the date of your gratitude or candlelight meeting by November 10th, 2008 and we will publish it in our upcoming holiday insert with the December issue of Better Times.

Email: bettertimes@aatoronto.org

Things We Cannot Change... *November is a month of remembrance.*

A Remember When is the lifeline of an alcoholic's journey down the road of Happy Destiny.

How many remember our first steps through the doors of AA: each meeting had a new friend ready to shake our hands in AA fellowship.

At the Friendly Group, the Here and Now Saturday morning meeting, the East York Hospital Service meeting or the Isabella Group, our first contact was with a gentleman sitting, not in a regular chair to most, but in a wheelchair, shaking the hands of newcomers and old timers of AA.

Albert W. a member of AA's Isabella Group had a heart of gold with his gracious manner. Albert's actions always projected the honesty, happiness and joy of his AA program to his fellows.

On any give day, only Albert knew how much he was hurting inside physically; he always portrayed a warm Albert smile enjoying both his life and his AA program one day at a time. Albert was an example that the promises can happen by believing and working the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Even with over 38 years of sobriety, Albert W. would go to any length to work his AA program. Many times within his first 30 years of sobriety, without a bus ticket, he would walk from his east end home to a meeting at the Lakeshore Group or to Mississauga.

Albert believed in and took great joy from his AA service activity, starting up the East General Hospital Service meeting, setting up the CAMH Saturday night meeting, and being a stalwart at his home group, the Isabella Group.

Albert had many expressions, here are a couple that his long time AA friends will remember.

"Newcomers should get a big book & be prepared to go through two pairs of shoes in their 1st year."

"Ol winos (alkies, aa "r") are like old soldiers, they just fade, fade away; but alkies in AA live on others' memory, & some of them are the stuff of legends."

"Going to meetings, is just second nature, it's like going to church everyday and twice on Sunday."

One thing with Albert, you didn't ask him to repeat whatever it was he was mumbling — he'd blast you, like you were some deaf moron.

AA members were saddened upon hearing the news of his passing in early 2008. It is important for our fellowship to remember those who have passed.

The Better Times Website Committee, with the guidance and help of the GTAI AA fellowship, is creating a "Remembrance – Things We Can Not Change" insert, to be published with the February 2009 issue.

The Committee would like to ask all home groups, districts and AA members in the GTAI fellowship to please list all members whom have passed in 2008, including a short overview of length of sobriety, nick name, expression or their AA experience, strength and hope (25 words limit).

The forms for this special insert will be available to email bettertimes@aatoronto.org, fax 416-487-5855 or personally drop off at the InterGroup monthly meeting or to the "234" office by January 10th, 2009.

AA Friends of Albert W.

Remember When...

Iwould like to thank Roy R for remembering me, and arranging for my chance to contribute.

I have been asked to write about my AA experience in the military. I have been in the CF for 33 years and sober for 18 years.

From the start, my already well developed alcoholic behaviour fit in well with the CF. We learned that we "worked hard and played hard" and "It's okay to hoot with the owls but you gotta soar with the eagles". I trained as an aviator

and we had rules about the time between our last drink and our first flight (the "bottle to throttle" rule) and I obeyed them.

That being said, those rules were based on average consumption rates and amounts, but as an alcoholic my drinking was anything but average. I didn't know any other way to live and my alcoholic behaviour was accepted; a DWI that I got ten years prior to getting sober didn't faze my superior or myself. I want to be clear: I was never forced to drink in the military, but my drink-

ing was almost never questioned or challenged, even when it lead to some fairly wild and out-of-control episodes. These were passed off as a "good man's fault", a phrase you might recognize.

Over time, my behaviour only got worse and many around me knew that I needed help long before I admitted it. When I hit bottom, the same military that was very accepting of my drinking was very supportive of my recovery. I went through a rehab clinic run by the...

(Continued on page 3)

Remembering Hughie C.

"He was a leader among men in AA circles."

Hughie C. passed away on September 29 and his sponsee of 44 years, John H., made this initial lament during an interview he was kind enough to grant me. Hughie had 48 years of sobriety, originally joining the Port Credit Group for a brief period of time and then going to the Lakeshore Group.

Hughie was "a hell of a sponsor, he kept us on our toes". John's brother introduced him to Hughie, but Hughie "didn't do the impossible; he didn't get him (John's brother) sober"; but John maintains that without Hughie, he would not be sober. As a sponsor, Hughie "had strict rules to keep in touch by telephone and took his sponsees to, or met them at, many different kinds of meetings – he wouldn't take no for an answer. Even with the health problems Hughie had, "he was always on the move."

Hughie and John "agreed about the authority of the Big Book. Hughie was a purist in his beliefs – he didn't like people setting themselves as an authority when he knew in his heart of hearts the didn't have any claiming rights."

"He was the first one to designate where people sat – all the old timers sat in the front row and he said, "You should be known for this". So at

the Lakeshore Group, John H., Eddie McB., Jim C., Tom B., Rubin B., Randy F., Eddie W., Moe and Hughie would all sit together. "He put a lot of store on old-timer presence as an example to members of the importance of meetings, not matter how much sobriety someone has."

Hughie didn't believe in a lot of the AA literature. He remarked that AA members at their home group were very often as good as any AA literature because of their combine wealth of knowledge and by their examples of experience, strength and hope.

Hughie started the Lakeshore Group. "He was a stickler for right things to do like going to all home meetings, regular phone calls from sponsees and that old-timers be visible by their presence at meetings (his legacy)" He also made sure that newcomers were encouraged to attend annual meetings of the ORC.

Hughie was always happy with a well-attended meeting. "His presence was a punch-line" and he will be sadly missed by the many who admired him.

With special thanks to John H.

**Mary P.
Restoration and Recovery (R & R Group)**

Healing

My mother never once healed a cut or scrape, never once removed a bruise. In all the times I fell off my tricycle or stumbled on the footpath, not once did she repair the wound.

She did, however, take me in her lap and comfort me. She bathed the knee, wiped the eye, and ran her fingers through my hair until I felt better.

My body had the job of coagulating the blood, knitting the sides of the wound together.

I figure it is the same way in AA. The fellowship of AA neither gets me sober, nor keeps me sober, nor solves my problems in life. My body and my mind have to do that, with God's great help. It is up to me to avoid that first drink. It is up to me to make amends.

The fellowship takes me into its bosom when I am down, or when I feel life has kicked my hard, and says "There, there, it's going to be alright", and the dreaded "This too shall pass".

And pass it does, in time, just as the pain of my scrape passed away while my mother distracted me and reminded me that the playground was still a pretty good place to be, just that I had to be careful how I went.

Chris G., Bloordale Group

Toronto to Host 2011 AA Hockey Tournament

Toronto A.A. Hockey has taken the province by storm. After winning the Windsor Coffee Cup in 2007, Toronto players repeated their dominance of the rink in North Bay in 2008. Two Toronto teams met in the championship game with the Toronto Black squeaking out their second consecutive Coffee Cup victory. The Blacks narrowly defeated an excellent Toronto Red team in a very close and exciting game. Our third Toronto team, the Toronto White, was narrowly defeated in the consolation round 5-4 by a high flying, spirited group from Ottawa.

The expansion of the Toronto A.A. hockey program has been thrilling to witness. In two short years, we have increased the number of players participating substantially. We look forward to our continued growth. Members of the A.A. program can enjoy "Canada's game" in a healthy, supportive, safe and sober environment. We encourage each other both on and off the ice. The fact that our numbers are increasing is proof positive of our commitment, love and service. We are a well-rounded group with long, median, and short-term sobriety. All members are welcome regardless of skill level.

In 2011, Toronto A.A. Hockey will be hosting the Coffee Cup Tournament. Committee work has already begun and we are very

excited to show the province a warm Toronto welcome. This year's Coffee Cup will be held in Brockville. Unfortunately we will only be permitted two teams due to ice availability. We are contemplating a Mini-Toronto series that would precede the Brockville Tournament.

North Bay did an outstanding job of hosting last years tourney. Our team members pulled together to help the organizers with prizes galore. "Thanks Guys". A grand roar came from the crowd of over 200 A.A. members and their families when Billy O. from Smith Falls (the oldest player in the tournament) was presented a gorgeous hand crafted sculpture of Bill and Bob and the man in the bed.

We would like to welcome new players and anyone interested in front office, coaching, or assisting duties, to our organization. We would also like to thank all members who came out to our dance last year. Plans are in the works for another event in the near future.

Come out and see how much fun sobriety can be. We play each Saturday at Ted Reeve Arena in the Bubble, (Main and Gerrard Sts.) from 2:00p.m.-3:00 p.m. We are usually still playing while "the Leafs" are headed to the golf course.

**Gary W.
Twelve Step Group**

Sybil C. – One of First Women to Find Sobriety in A.A.

Sybil C. got sober in A.A. in March 1941, and is thought to be the first female member of the Fellowship west of the Mississippi.

Her introduction to A.A. came on a day when she was coming off of a drunk and spotted a sign for “Sultan Turkish Baths.” As she remembers it, “I decided I could sweat it out there and get myself in shape, but I thought I’d better have something to read. So I stopped at the news-stand and bought a *Saturday Evening Post* for five cents. It was dated March 1, 1941, and on the cover it said, ‘Alcoholics Anonymous, by Jack Alexander’.”

After reading the article, she says: “even though I was just too sick to think, I knew there was hope.” Sybil then “wrote a rather pitiful letter to New York. I said, ‘I am a desperate alcoholic and I’ll take the next plane back there and take your cure.’”

Her letter was answered a few days later by Ruth Hock, Bill W.’s secretary, who assured her that a trip to New York wasn’t necessary. Sybil, who was living in Los Angeles at the time, was directed by Ruth to the one A.A. meeting in the city.

She went to that next meeting and at the conclusion of it group members turned their attention to a stack of letters seeking information about A.A. that had been prompted by the Jack Alexander article.

After dividing up the letters among various members, the man taking charge of the operation turned to Sybil and said: “I’ve been saving this stack for the last because we now have a woman alcoholic. Her name is Sybil. Come up here, Sybil. I’m putting you in charge of all the women.” Her job then was to drive around and knock on the doors of the women who had written to A.A. “The meeting grew—and I mean it mushroomed.”

Sybil became the executive secretary of the Los Angeles Central office of A.A., a position she held for 12 years. Sybil died in 1988, having been sober in A.A. for 47 years.

(reprinted from Markings)

Remember When *continued from pg. 1*

... military and I am forever grateful to its staff that graced me with such care and support and introduced me to a new way of living. While the clinic was not part of AA, they used a lot of AA literature and recommended I try AA. I did, and I’m happy to say that, just like so many others that have come to AA and stayed, my life now is far better in ways I could not ever have imagined. My AA experience has included great groups and fellowship, supported by the Military, in every base and unit I have worked in.

I would like to finish, especially in the theme of “Remembrance”, by remembering a friend and fellow member, Ray L. Ray passed away a few years ago, succumbing to a cancer that slowly, steadily and in the end, quite painfully took him. Whenever I think of the power of this Program, of our Fellowship and of the Higher Power I choose to call God, I think of Ray. Ray endured his fate with quiet grace and dignity: he cared for his family, he accepted the love and support of others and in the end, he passed peacefully. Ray will always stand as an example to me of what AA offers. So in closing, I honour the memory of Ray L, Chief Warrant Officer, Canadian Forces. One of thousands, God bless and keep you, rest in peace.

**Gerry C
CF, Germany**

haveyouheard

Recent Medallions:

Linda W.	20	King City Group	October 6
George S	5	Westmoreland Group	October 9
Dan F	20	The Hill Group	October 16
Ann Marie R	5	The Hill Group	October 16
Wendy H	1	The Pine Hills Group	October 27
Patricia T	5	The Anniversary Group	October 29

Upcoming Medallions:

Diane S.	5	Golden Mile Group	November 5
Debbie	1	Markland Wood Group	November 6

Meeting Changes:

Markland Wood Group (C) Tues/Thurs (SUB WEST): The meeting time has been changed to 8pm.

Meadowvale South Group Thurs (SUB WEST): has a 7:00 PM closed meeting on Thursday Night, the same night as their 8:30 PM open meeting.

Pine Hills Helping Hands Discussion Group (C) Wed (EAST): The meeting time has been changed to 8:30pm.

Announcements:

GTA Intergroup Literature Department: The new hours of the Literature Department at 234 Eglinton Ave E are Tues., Wed and 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM. The telephone number for the literature department is 416-487-9865.

Arnold P. will celebrate forty years of sobriety at the River Drive Park Group in Newmarket on November 24th. The group meets at 8:00 pm in the Victory Baptist Church at 18408 Yonge St, just north of Green Lane Road.

GREATER TORONTO AREA INTERGROUP MONTHLY BOARDROOM BOOKINGS FOR SUB-COMMITTEES

Correctional Facilities:

1st Monday of the month at 7 pm

Self-Support:

1st Wednesday of the month at 7 pm

Archives:

2nd Friday of the month at 7:00 pm

Website &

Better Times Newsletter:

2nd Saturday of the month at 1 pm

Cooperation with the

Professional Community (CPC):

2nd Monday of the month at 7 pm

Access Ability:

3rd Sunday of the month at 11 am

Phone Training Session:

3rd Sunday of the month at 1:30 pm

Public Information:

3rd Monday of the month at 7:30 pm

Treatment Facilities:

3rd Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm

Information AA Day:

Last Monday at 7:30 pm

Twelfth Step:

Last Friday of the month at 6:30 pm

Finance Subcommittee*:

Second-last Tuesday of the month at 4:30 pm (*non-committee members: attendance by appointment only)

Operating Committee*:

Second-last Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm (*non-committee members: attendance by appointment only)

Monthly General Meeting of

GTA Intergroup is held on the last Tuesday of the month at 8 pm at the Glebe Road United Church – 20 Glebe Rd E, off Yonge St. (near Davisville subway)

Phone 234 to ensure the meeting you want to attend isn't cancelled during any particular month...

All Subcommittees meet at the Intergroup Office
234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 202

Serenity

"God grant me the serenity ..." and I sit here wondering when I'm going to get it.

For a long time now I have been chanting these words, eyeing you enviously, and wishing that I had half the serenity that you had. You look so serene. You chair, you speak, you greet newcomers, and you go for coffee. And me? I struggle through life with the little aggravations that wear me down throughout the day, so that by eight o'clock at night I'm sitting here, frazzled, in the second row, wondering how many years it will be before I receive my serenity laurels.

While I was asleep, I was serene. The troubles of the world did not intrude on my consciousness. While I was asleep, my higher power draped a soft, light mantle of serenity over me, in the way, when I'm baby-sitting, I pull up the blanket over the sleeping infant. While I was asleep I was given a mantle of serenity, sufficient to last me this day, and it was in my possession from the moment I awoke.

The trouble is, once I became conscious, my mind took over. Then was cast aside the light blanket of serenity and I began to organize the world along

my lines. Once I began to take control, I ran headlong into the world.

I can go back, you know, and retrieve that blanket so thoughtlessly tossed aside. That gift of serenity, freely given to me, while I slept, without my asking for it, can be retrieved and re-assumed. I need only make the time, about five seconds, to recite that prayer, and I can reclaim the serenity that I've ignored all day long.

God Grant Me The Serenity? God grant me the Wisdom to retrieve this gift, and to use it for the remainder of this day.

Chris G., Bloordale Group



Untitled

There's different moods that change our days. There's different thoughts that change our ways. One day I'm happy and nothing goes wrong, my heart and my spirit are filled up with song. Another day I don't want to open my eyes from the burning and soreness from the tears that I cry.

When the bottle I opened in times of before the feeling of fitting in I felt it no more. I loved this feeling that rushed to my brain, the familiar sensation that flowed through my vein. The enemy was back another battle I lost. Not giving a damn, not caring the cost.

They say to love others you must love yourself first. In loving myself I truly am cursed. I try to help others and treat them with care. Destined to be alone, I'm going no where. Giving up on myself I do really well, and with the alcohol inside I'm living right back in hell.

If I hold you as hostage, messing with my head, I'll end up back to the bottle and soon enough dead. So I'm in for a fight with every breath that I take, and to choose to keep living is the choice that I make.

Donna L., The Friendly Group

September '08: Intergroup Report

Collection of the 7th Tradition, was \$197.36.

Finance Report: Gregg W. (Rox Glen Trad.) Group donations are up significantly. Gratitude donations are down due to incomplete and/or out-of-date group mailing lists. Please phone Alexx at 234 with your updated group/member mailing information. Operating Committee is accepting resumes for two new Finance Committee members. It's a two year service commitment that requires five years of continuous sobriety plus some business/accounting experience. Please forward resumes to the Operating Committee c/o 234. The proposed 2009 Budget will be available soon.

Motion to Suspend Regular Business re: Notice of Motion moved by Greg H. (Hill) and seconded by Gord B. (Port Credit) – **Motion Carried.**

Wes B. (Long Branch) was asked by the Chair to facilitate the Notice of Motion. Wes outlined some guidelines for all present to follow to maintain order during the proceedings. The Motion that is on the Floor was not a change to the Procedures but to determine whether the Motion is of a good enough quality to go back to the groups for a Referendum. A simple majority only was necessary.

Wes then **read the Notice of Motion** as presented in April 2008.

As per protocol, Doug R. (St. Clements) – who first presented the Motion, was invited to speak first and said he was here to represent the ad hoc committee as well as his home group and had no further comments to make.

Floor Discussion: please refer to complete transcript under documents at www.aatoronto.org.

Motion to Call the Question moved by Ray (Brampton New Life)

Wes instructed the Floor to a vote on the Motion. The Floor agreed this was to be done by a show of hands. **Voting for the Motion: 46, Voting against the Motion: 15 – Motion Carried.**

Wes explained that AA is always protected by the Voice of the Minority which allows those in the minority vote to address the Floor concerning the motion. Wes then asked if anyone would like to speak to the minority.

Maire O'B. (Leslie) urged all voting representatives to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the Motion, to know exactly what they are voting on, that this wasn't something to be taken lightly.

Wes asked if anyone who voted in the Majority wished to change their vote. No one retracted their yes vote, so the vote stands as it is.

Lynn B. (City Central), ad hoc Chair said they are sending out to the groups the Motion along with two attachments – a copy of the current Procedures and Guidelines and a copy of the P & G with the proposed changes.

Fran (recording secretary) asked all group reps that haven't done so to forward their email addresses to office@aatoronto.org or alex@aaatoronto.org. To receive a mailing of the Motion, call the office 416-487-5591.

Next General Meeting: Tues. Oct. 28 at 8 p.m. at Glebe Rd. United. **Elections** for the Operating Committee will held at this meeting.

For complete transcript please go to documents at www.aatoronto.org.