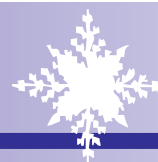


# BETTER TIMES

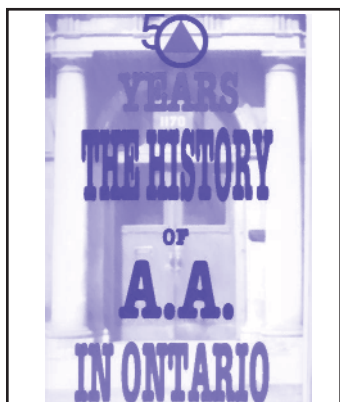


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*Just imagine sharing that fellowship with close to 3000 alcoholics!*

*.... See story right*



This book is available from Intergroup for \$10.00 (a limited number of copies exist.)



## How Long Has It Been?

How long has it been since you've treated yourself to a fantastic AA happening? How long has it been since you've chatted with those old friends? You know, the ones you knew in your first few years. Has it been more than a few 24 hours since you've attended the ORC? If you have answered "yes" to any of these questions you may wish to attend the 2004 edition of the Ontario Regional Conference.

A big part of recovery for many folks in AA is the fellowship found in our rooms. Just imagine sharing that fellowship with close to 3000 alcoholics! Of course, over the years our lives change and quite often old customs fall by the wayside. Perhaps you used to attend the ORC when you were new to the program and your sponsor thought it was a good idea. Perhaps you used to go when your life wasn't as hectic as it is now.

But do you remember when the annual ORC was the highlight of your recovery year? Why not make it part of your recovery again? Our upcoming

America. There will also be panels, talk-a-thons and don't forget the banquet.

The ORC provides an excellent opportunity to hook-up with old friends. Many long-forgotten acquaintances are sure to be there this spring. As time goes on and we grow in AA we all change. That's to be expected. Many of us change groups, sponsors even cities! But the one thing that we can all share in is the annual ORC.

If you can't recall the last ORC that you attended why not come out and share in the fellowship of recovery. Bring along a new sponsee or a fellow long-timer. Don't worry about being alone; you never have to be alone in Alcoholics Anonymous. In fact I guarantee that you'll find a friendly face or two. How long has it been since you've attended the ORC?

Dan MacK.



conference promises to be one for the books. We have an excellent range of speakers, both local and from all over North

## Archives Breakfast 2003

Activity starts early, around 7 to 7:30 a.m. Members are busy setting up archival items of the past for all to view — things that are held near and dear to the hearts of all AA members. Some are photos of past members, both local and worldwide. Some easily recognizable, like Dr. Bob S. and Bill W. and others who played out roles in the development of AA across the country and brought comfort and relief to the suffering alcoholic. Some played major roles and others played lesser ones. Tenderly placed are books and letters that are all preserved against time. They are significant in the historical chronicle of our AA past and present.

The speakers at the morning breakfast meeting are members with longtime sobriety and will share their memories of how AA

once was; the way it was when they walked through the doors of AA. This year, Ben W. from the *Thorncliffe Park Group* in Toronto and Ann M. from the *Friendly Group* in Ridgetown have been asked to relate their AA experiences from 30 to 40 years ago. This year's chairperson is Bob D. who recently celebrated 45 years of sobriety up in Barrie. Members with 40 years plus participate in the readings and draws. Several prizes are given out after the speakers and mainly include our much-loved AA books and literature that offer us so much hope and recovery.

The Oasis Club on Lakeshore Drive E. in Mississauga has provided the Annual Archives Breakfast with an agreeable and comfortable site for this annual occasion for many years. The buffet brunch is

most enjoyable and the hall lends itself to handling larger crowds, should that be needed. The price of the tickets provides the Archives Committee with much needed funds to continue its work of preserving AA's history. A most ambitious goal of the committee is a simple revision of the Book entitled "50 years-The History of AA in Ontario" with subsequent republication. Its completion date is scheduled for 2005, when the AA World Conference is held in Toronto.

The committee is looking forward to Archives Breakfast 2004 to be held November 7th at the Oasis Club. Appropriately enough, it is always held close to Remembrance Day. It is a vivid and poignant reminder of our own mended lives and of those recovered members who have gone before us.

Bernadette MacL.

Christmas can be a challenge for some in our fellowship. For some the first sober Christmas has come and gone. Perhaps as a newcomer, the task seemed daunting. I was uncomfortable those first holiday seasons. I kept a score card of what answers I was most comfortable with when anyone persisted in trying to give me a drink. I believe I am more genuinely comfortable now, and part of that, I believe, is because it is understood by many at social functions that some people just do not drink! And sometimes they really do not care if you don't join them! Imagine that!!

One of our slogans asks us to "remember when". At Christmas, I experience many "remember whens". What I did

## The Editors Say...

### Holiday Reflections

not know was that my family and friends tolerated their disappointment with me to a greater extent at Christmas. They were forgiving. In remembering some particular embarrassing and disappointing seasonal events, I actually believed at the time that I had some measure of control. Not so – people were just being kind. Nobody wants a difficult scene at Christmas.

Who among us appreciated the serenity and joy of the season, while in our drunken states we grew resentful? And to reflect upon the worry our families endured – how do we not regret

this past? The broken promises, the tears, the harsh words spoken in an instant, the turkey sliding across the frozen front yard when it was thrown outside.

I now can sit with friends and family and I do not see the looks of worry and disappointment on their faces. I can be counted on to help out – to be there for others. I find that the general family matters of controversy and complaints are just part of how families are – imperfect. Just like me !!

Gratitude is one of the greater feelings I experience over the Christmas holidays.

This I think is because I can now actually feel the joy and peace and harmony that is so close to the surface during this time. I pray that I can carry and share this joy and harmony when I visit friends and family.

Holiday reflections for me are times to rejoice in the spirit of the season. It is a time for me to practice the steps and carry the message of harmony and joy that we receive in our fellowship. And it is also a time for us also to reflect on another miracle. One that has been celebrated for centuries. And that miracle brought to the world one who preached living a life by principles – not very different from the principles we are so blessed to grow with and practice in our fellowship.

*Dennis O.*

### Maybe It's You

It was one of those cold winter nights in the Haight District of San Francisco, the kind where the rain hurts, and your breath forms huge cotton balls that bounce on the pavement.

I was driving an eyesore that could only be referred to as a "car" by someone who was either a shameless liar or a good friend. Technically, the vehicle was totalled when I bought it from an unscrupulous neighbour, because it needed an engine

overhaul that would have cost more than the car itself. I added a quart of oil before every journey. Most of it would leak out along the way. I tried to imagine I was driving a huge magical snail; that way I didn't mind the slow speeds and the slime trail it left.

The car's outer paint had transformed into a hideous mixture of rust and "something brown." The engine sounded like a lawnmower with tuberculosis. If anyone ever wondered what the inside of an automobile

*See Maybe Page 4*

First Things First is one of our original slogans, found in the Big Book on page 135. Little has changed since the late 1930's interpretation, when this "motto" follows a story of a fellow who is pressured by his overindulgence in coffee and cigarettes, and eventually gets drunk over it.

An appropriate acronym for Slip is "Sobriety Loses Its Priority", and looking back at my own journey, there were times when my priorities wandered. Though I didn't drink in the year and a half I was absent from meetings, the old ideas, unmanageability and insanity returned little by little. As they did, the reasons for staying sober, and the defense against the first drink, dwindled.

I see that I have learned more about what First Things First is NOT, and what will NOT keep me sober, happy and free.

My family will not keep me sober, happy and free. Though

### First Things First

they may want this for me as passionately as I want it for myself, they are, in effect, part of the problem. They are the reality that I perceive to be different than it should be.

My job will not keep me sober, happy and free. However,



after my annual raises and the odd performance bonus, I might be able to afford therapy one day.

My significant other will not keep me sober, happy and free.

My intelligence will not keep me sober, happy and free. Nor will my lack of it.

My sponsor will not keep me sober, happy and free. In fact, he occasionally drives me crazy, and although he would never cause me to drink, he can make me awfully damn thirsty.

The fellowship will not keep me sober, happy and free. Though they do play a big part in it, a dependency on them falls short of what **A l c o h o l i c s** Anonymous and recovery is about. They are, after all, only human.

God will not keep me sober, happy and free. He will give me the ability to move mountains, provided I bring along a big shovel.

I found that one statement will keep me sober, happy and free. This statement, of itself, is nothing, of course. When I include all the implications and responsibilities attached to it, allowing it to govern every

action I perform, dictate my way of life, and guide my perception of the world around me, it becomes the identification of my very soul.

"My name is Gord and I'm an alcoholic." First Things First.

*Gordon M.*

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 Published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area  
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*Opinions expressed in BETTER TIMES are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Greater Toronto Area Intergroup.*

## Archives Alley

January 13, 1943, was a landmark day for Canada, as the first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous quietly took place in the Little Denmark restaurant in downtown Toronto. Within a few years, meetings and groups were forming around Ontario, and hundreds of alcoholics were introduced to a program of sobriety.

So how did AA arrive in North Bay?

Frank S. appears to be the first person in this area who could attribute his sobriety to AA. He attended meetings in Toronto and was instrumental in starting the *Gateway Group* in April or May of 1947. Their meetings were held in the church basement of the Pro Cathedral of the Assumption in the heart of North Bay.

Meetings and groups continued to spring up in the area over the next few years. Most were open speaker meetings, with wives and families attending. The *Nipissing Discussion Group* began in 1952, and the *Fellowship Group* in 1956. A group for Natives, called the *Birds of a Feather Group*, was set up around 1983 and the *Garden Village Group* was started on the reservation near North Bay. Temagami got its first active group around 30 years ago. These groups flourished with regular attendance of the North Bay members, often the only ones in attendance. A women's group, the *Galcoholics*, was started on Monday nights and still thrives today.

The first area delegate for the North East Area was Bob McC., who was such a good friend to me. Bob and his beloved wife, Viv, were passionate members of AA and carried the message wherever they went.

From a small meeting of two ministers and six alcoholics in a small restaurant in downtown Toronto, AA's resolute message of recovery from alcoholism has traveled north and over many miles across the continent to bring hope to many.

Bernadette MacL.

## Have You Heard?

### Recent Medallions:

**Mike H.**, 25 yrs., *Sat. Morn. Disc. Group*. Nov. 18.  
**Esther D.**, 5 yrs., *U of T Group*. Dec. 7.  
**Bernadette R.**, 1 yr., *U of T Group*. Dec. 7.  
**Walter C.**, 35 yrs., *Unionville Group*. Dec. 17.  
**Bill P.**, 20 yrs., *Start Today Group*. Dec. 20.  
**Mari Anne K.**, 10 yrs., *Reaching Out Group*. Dec. 30.

### Upcoming Medallions:

**Shirley E.**, 1 yr., *Rexdale United Group*. Jan. 2.  
**John P.**, 20 yrs., *Rexdale United Group*. Jan. 3.  
**Rob C.**, 5 yrs., *Bayview Group*. Jan. 4.  
**Al C.**, 1 yr., *Rexdale United Group*. Jan. 6.  
**Kevin M.**, 10 yr., *North Toronto Group*. Jan. 6.  
**Harold M.**, 30 yrs., *East York Group*. Jan. 6.  
**Ed & Bobby Y.**, 30 yrs., *Don Valley Group*. Jan. 6.  
**Dale S.**, 20 yrs., *Sunnyside Group*. Jan. 8.  
**Jennifer B.**, 1 yr., *Bayview Group*. Jan. 11.  
**Jeff B.**, 1 yr., *East York Group*. Jan. 13.  
**Andrea W.**, 5 yrs., *Agincourt Acorn*. Jan. 13.  
**Pat A.**, 25 yrs., *Pathfinders Group*. Jan. 14.  
**Barb K.**, 1 yr., *New Anchor Group*. Jan. 15.  
**Jim M.**, 20 yrs., *Reaching Out Group*. Jan. 29.  
**Marc H.**, 1 yr., *East York Group*. Mar. 16.

### Group Anniversaries:

**Twelfth Tradition Group.** 30 yr. anniversary will be celebrated Wed. Jan. 7, 2004.

**Thornclyffe Park Group.** 20 yrs. Fri., Jan. 9, 2004. All are welcome. 8:30 p.m. meeting.

**Credit Valley Group.** 17 yr. anniversary, Jan. 18, 2004.

### Meeting Changes

**Markham-Stouffville Hospital Meeting:(C).** Tues. 7 p.m. (SUBURBAN N.E.) New Location: The old train station on Old Markham Main St., across from the Firehall. Non-smoking, wheelchair accessible. It will still be called the *Markham-Stouffville Hospital Meeting*, until they decide on a new name.

**First Things First Discussion Group:(C).** Tues. 1:30 p.m. (SUBURBAN WEST) will now be known as *Restoration and Recovery Group Discussion Meeting*. All other info stays the same.

**Oakville Odyssey (Youth Group)(C).** Wed. 7 p.m. (SUBURBAN WEST) Now meets on Monday. Same time, same location.

**Rexdale Breakfast Meeting.** Sat. 8:30 a.m. (NORTHWEST) Now meets at Mickey Gee's Eatery. 1889 Albion Rd. One light west of Hwy. 27.

**U of T Discussion Meeting (C)** Mon & Thurs 5:30 p.m. (CENTRAL) has temporarily relocated (until further notice) to Bahen Centre, 40 St. George St. College & St. George (next to Loffler Centre) St. George entrance room 3004.

**Park Royal Group** Thurs. (SUBURBAN WEST) is now a closed discussion meeting.

**Last Chance Discussion Group (C),** Thurs. 8 p.m. (Sujburban NW) new location Holy Cross Catholic School, Morningstar Drive, east of Darcel Avenue.

**Lawrence Plaza Discussion (C).** Wed. 8:30 p.m. (North) Back at St. Margaret's Church Hall, Ridley Blvd at Avenue Rd., 1 block south of Wilson.

### Special Events, Conventions & Conferences

More information on all these events is available on the bulletin board at the GTA Intergroup offices (address below).

**REXDALE United Group.**(NORTH WEST) will be hosting a TWELVE STEP ROUNDUP Saturday Jan 17, 2004 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at St. Paul's The Apostle Anglican Church, 2182 Kipling Ave. N. of Rexdale Blvd. 12 speakers, 12 steps and 5 principles, and a closing speaker. Fellowship, coffee and doughnuts. All Welcome.

**SOBRIETY AND MORE IN 2004.** Ontario Regional Conference March 19-21. Royal York Hotel. AA, Al-Anon & Alateen Speakers, Panels, meetings, dance and lots of fellowship. Registration \$25. (Alateen \$12.) Banquet extra \$50. Info (416)487-2677 or [www.aatoronto.org](http://www.aatoronto.org). Pre register by mail before March 4, 2004. to ORC P.O. box 804, 31 Adelaide St E. Toronto ON M5C-2K1. Visa, Master card or cheque (no cash via mail please) Hotel registration single or double guaranteed rate \$149 till Feb. 23 Royal York Hotel (416) 863-6333 (mention ORC when booking).

**Spiritual New Year's Eve** Wed. Dec 31 9 p.m. Holy Rosary Church, 354 St. Clair Ave W., at St. Clair Ave subway. An event for AA, Al-Anon and Alateen members and their friends and families. Volunteers needed. Tickets \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door. James M. (416) 720-2502.

### New Groups:

**IM TIRZU O/C** Sunday 8 p.m. (NORTH WEST) JACS Place 858 Sheppard Ave West near subway. Non-smoking, non-alcoholic sign interpreters allowed.

**One Day At A Time Discussion (C).** Wed. 7 p.m. (SUBURBAN NW). Scott Funeral Home (Brampton Chapel), 289 Main St. Enter through parking lot door, turn left and take elevator to 2nd floor. Meeting held in Caledon room. Step study, tradition 3 requirements. Non-smoking, wheelchair accessible, non-alcoholic sign language interpreters NOT allowed.

**Here's How (O).** Sun. 8 p.m. (SUBURBAN NW). Chemical Withdrawal Centre McLaughlin Rd. S. of Queen St. Brampton. 12-Step Speaker meeting. Non-smoking, wheel chair accessible.

**Noon Meeting At The Sanctuary (O)** 25 Charles St. East, between Yonge and Church. five minute walk from Yonge/Bloor subway. (CENTRAL),

The following meetings are cancelled on New Year's Day: **Lakeshore Noon Discussion, Park Royal Group, Scarborough Thursday Noon Meeting.**

**Spirit of Women Discussion (C)** East Metro Oasis Club, 921 Danforth Ave., (between Pape and Donalds). Big Book Study Sunday 4:00 p.m.

The following meetings are cancelled on New Year's Eve: **Downtown 5:15 Group and Noon Rap Group.**

### How to reach us

Submit group news, medallions, other event notices, letters to the editor or articles to BETTER TIMES (before Jan. 10 for the Feb. issue), mail to GTA Intergroup. 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 202, Toronto, ON, M4P 1K5, by fax 416-487-5855 or by e-mail to [btimes@aatoronto.org](mailto:btimes@aatoronto.org) or e-mail [joe@vex.net](mailto:joe@vex.net). Only signed submissions with a means of contact will be accepted. For subscriptions call Alexx at 416-487-8110.

## General Meeting November 25, 2003

PRESENT: 59 groups. 5  
District Liaisons, 13  
Subcommittee Chairpersons or  
reps.

### CHAIRPERSON'S

**REMARKS:** Derek F. welcomed new Alternates and Reps and discussed the concept of AA service.

**Self-Support / Slide Copy of Presentation on file at 234**

Derek F. outlined **GTA Intergroup Operating Procedures and Guidelines.**

**Finance Report – Wayne E.** (Half-Century), **Finance committee member.** Income for October (Gratitude Month) was \$51,373, up from \$34,104 in 2002. The Finance committee now projects a deficit of around \$5,000. **one more Finance committee member is needed for 2004.** Five years of continuous sobriety and some business-related background is needed. **Resumes to 234.**

Regular order of business suspended for semi-annual presen-



tation of workshops about the subcommittees and what they do.

Presentations: **ACCESS ABILITY – Stephanie K.** (Hill Group), **Chairperson;** **TREATMENT FACILITIES – Diana M.** (Thorncliffe Park) **Chair;** **PUBLIC INFORMATION – Kevin M.** (North Toronto), **Chairperson;** **COOPERATION with the PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY – Dave R.** (Woodbridge),

**Chairperson;** **CORRECTIONS FACILITIES – Michael C., Dist.04 CF Chair;** **ARCHIVES – John G.** (Unionville), **Chairperson;** **ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE – Clay R.** (Pine Hills) **2004 Chairperson;** **GRAPEVINE – Scott MacD.** (Bloomdale), **Chairperson;** **WINTER SEASON OPEN HOUSE – Matti H.** (Wanstead), **Operating Committee liaison;** **INFORMATION AA DAY – Gary L.**

(Recovery), **Operating Committee liaison;** **NEWSLETTER – Jim H.** (Keep It Simple), **Chairperson;** **RECEPTION – Donna M.** (Thorncliffe Park), **Operating Committee liaison;** **WEB SITE – Christina M.** (Welcome), **Alternate Chairperson;** **TWELFTH STEP – Colin B., Chairperson;** **SELF-SUPPORT – Jim A.** (Wexford), **Acting Chairperson**

The subcommittees offer many opportunities for service. **Jim A. (Wexford) outlined the following opportunities :**

Phone Duty / 12 Step Duty

A new Self-Support Chair needed. Also this committee needs District support!

2 new Junior Finance Committee members needed

Greeters for the ORC

Winter Season Open House volunteers

**NEEDED: A Cartoonist for Better Times**

Corrections / Treatment Facilities volunteers

The meeting closed with the Responsibility Pledge.

## A Sponsor's Quiet Help

A member of the program who previously had attended meetings regularly, suddenly stopped going to meetings.

After a few weeks, his sponsor decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening and the sponsor found the sponsee at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his sponsor's visit, the sponsee welcomed him, and led him to a big chair in front of the fireplace, and waited.

His sponsor made himself comfortable, but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the sponsor took the fire tongs and carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone. Then he sat back in his chair, still silent. The sponsee watched all this in quiet fascination. As the one lone ember's flame diminished, there was a

momentary glow and then it's fire was gone.

Soon it was cold and dead. Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. Just before the sponsor was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it. As the sponsor reached the door to leave, the sponsee said, "Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I'll see you at the meeting in the morning."

*Author unknown. Submitted by Jim B.*

### Maybe from Page 2

seat looked like, my car had the answers. It was a difficult car to drive because you had to keep your fingers and toes crossed to keep the engine running.

That night I must have uncrossed my fingers to scratch something. The car died in the middle of a four-lane stretch of Oak Street. I coasted as far as I could, hoping for a place to turn off, but the street was lined with parked cars and the nearest intersection was beyond coasting distance.

There I sat, in busy evening traffic, no lights, no locomotion, as tons of steel and plastic screamed by. In my rearview mirror I saw a pair of headlights pull up and stop behind me. I knew what was coming. Soon the horn would start and someone would be cursing at me. In San Francisco, if you dawdle too long after a light turns green, you get the horn. If you dare to come to a full stop at a stop sign, you get the horn from the car behind you. I figured I was begging for trouble. But I was wrong.

A stranger got out of the car and came to my window. He shouted, "Do you want a push?"

I was stunned but must have nodded in the affirmative. He

waved to his car and two teens piled out to apply themselves to my bumper. When I was safely delivered to a side street, they hopped back into their car and rejoined the sea of anonymous traffic. I didn't get to thank them. Over the years, I've realized something about "the stranger" who stopped to help. I've noticed that every time I'm in trouble, he appears. He never looks the same. Sometimes he's a woman. His age and ethnicity vary. But he's always there.

I've started to understand he's the best part of what makes us human beings. The one true thing in this world is an unasked kindness provided by a stranger. It's the invisible cord that binds us all together and makes life worthwhile.

This year, when you find yourself immersed in the clutter and bustle, annoyed by the long lines, baffled about how you'll get everything done, remember this: One of the people in that crowd is the stranger. Today, maybe it's you.

*Ed R.*