

# BETTER TIMES



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*These were people trying to tread a spiritual path*

*.... See story right*

### What A Party!

All those 302 people who attended the annual Christmas Day Winter Season Open House had a wonderful time, enjoying the great food, live music, as well as two open meetings.

It was a great day for all. Many thanks to all those that volunteered and on behalf of the committee, thank you. We'll be looking forward to seeing you again, next Christmas.

Yours in Love and Service,  
*Kenny C. (Chairman)*



**W**hen I first walked through the doors of AA in September 1977, in Thunder Bay, I could never imagine that I would be sharing the message in as many ways as I have had the good fortune to do. Recently, I was in Rome, Italy, speaking to a conference of 50 or so Italians from across that country. The nature of my visit there was an invitation from the Italian council for this world-wide community that teaches Christian meditation in the way shared by John Main, a Benedictine Monk. This is the way I learned to meditate early in my sobriety and something I have continued for some 23 years.

The topic I was to speak on was Meditation and Addiction. In essence, what I was doing was sharing very much of my own story about hitting bottom in alcoholism, finding AA, and trying to take step 11 seriously by finding a way of meditation and prayer that worked for me. I talked about the nature of addiction and how it keeps us chained to a false self. I have found that even in sobriety

## Arrivederci Roma!

the nature of this disease can have serious consequences if I don't follow the steps and program of action in all areas of my life. For me, this means that I truly I have a daily reprieve, if I maintain my spiritual condition.

When I shared the Twelve Steps of AA and the universal spiritual truths contained therein with the attendees, there was an immediate and overwhelming connection and appreciation.



These were people trying to tread a spiritual path, and they recognized immediately the truth contained in the Twelve Steps. Many came up to me afterwards and asked if they could use the Twelve Steps in their lives or visit some AA meetings. Another few people talked about alcoholism and drug addiction in

their own families and I was able to give them the contact info for the Italian General Service Office in Rome. I was truly awed by the response of these people to AA and the steps and incredibly grateful that I was able to share this amazing gift.

One of the most significant comments came from my translator, who said she found this concept of "God as we understood Him" to be particularly freeing and important as a way of invitation rather than indoctrination. There was also a psychologist there who worked with people with addictions and he was truly grateful to learn more about the Twelve Steps. He even asked if it were really possible to have AAs meditate, because of our somewhat distracted natures. I assured him it worked for me and that we are asked to do this in Step 11, so he could freely suggest it to any recovering alcoholic who was willing to try it. It has truly been a way of integration for me. For info about this community or meditation visit [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org) or [www.meditatio.ca](http://www.meditatio.ca)

*George Z., Woodbridge Group*

## Twelfth Tradition Group's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**T**he first continuing gay AA meeting was held December 21, 1973, in Holy Trinity Church in the Eaton Centre Area. It was started by four gay AA members, David C., Ron P., an Australian who had sobered up in Toronto, Kevin B. (deceased) and Jack M. who sobered up in Australia.

We understood how some gay persons could feel isolated at open mainstream meetings, or frustrated at closed discussions because of personal anonymity. A recovery space with familiar attitudes and people seemed necessary. They were our constituency.

The Intergroup Office sent our request to be listed back with the words "see Tradition Six" scrawled across it. We contacted New York, explaining the situation, and they replied that if we followed the Traditions exactly and kept to the 12 steps, we might continue, stating that each area was independent in these matters.

We sent our 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition donations to New York. Our mentors were a similar group in California. So we used their name "Alcoholics Together". The early years were difficult, but slowly people came and some began to stay. A big problem was finding a meeting place. Great

interest was shown when we spoke of alcoholics and recovery, but refusal came when they heard about our members.

When we got a space, the person who had arranged it would eventually be transferred and the replacement was rarely pleased by our presence, so the search would begin again.

In our fifth month, a young man came one evening and listened until his turn, and said, "I have been to AA before, but I always left because I couldn't identify with the straight speakers. I supposed that there was no hope for me; I could never

*See Anniversary Page 4*

I went to my first conference in 2000 with my best friend. She made sure that we volunteered to be greeters early on Friday so I would not miss a meeting, and we didn't. I could not get over the messages carried by so many people from all over the world, who were just like me. To hear 3,000 plus members of the fellowship say the Serenity Prayer together was another experience in itself. I was one year and nine months sober at my first Conference and there were members present with only hours of sobriety. That weekend is one that I will never forget; I will not miss another one as long as I stay sober and alive, God willing.

I also became more active in the years to follow, as I realized the amount of work and dedica-

## The Editors Say...

### Making the Best of What the ORC Has To Offer

tion that went into the weekend. I have done it all — greeting, public information, newcomers room, and even read at an open meeting. I owe AA and a treatment centre my life, and just giving back allows me to keep what I have gained.

Since my first conference, I have learned many survival skills to help me through the three-day Conference.

#### Hospitality Suites:

Information about many groups and treatment centres, and interesting pieces of AA literature are

set up in suites throughout the weekend. The suites are a great place to meet members from other groups, share stories, buy great stuff, coffee and food and experience the Fellowship itself. These suites are all available to all who are there to carry the message or receive it. Also, it's a great time to find out about the different treatment centres if one is considering attending one.

#### Greeters:

Many volunteers are needed to greet the hundreds of people from all over Ontario, Canada

and the USA who attend during the weekend. It is a great way to extend the hand of AA and to meet other members and get active.

#### Quiet Rooms:

There are rooms set up for those who just want to get away from the hustle and bustle.

#### Beginners' Room:

This room is for all newcomers to the ORC, especially those just leaving treatment or attending their first conference. In this room, the Chairperson and the Beginners' Committee hold open meetings and share their experience, strength and hope. It is also a great place to find out what AA is all about and help newcomers on their journey.

Terry H.

## Remember When

I can remember when I couldn't remember!! But there are times I do remember. I hope I never forget these painful times. Now these past painful memories help me to heal.

Someone once told me at a meeting that there is a difference between guilt and shame. I was suffering a painful memory. I felt ashamed, and afraid to share. It was then that I was told that the difference between guilt and shame goes something like this: Shame is about feeling I am worthless, guilt is about honestly admitting what I did. Shame we can let go of, but we are always guilty of our actions.

I feel worthwhile and honest when I admit guilt. Shame can torture me. The key is never to deny the guilt, but to let the shame fade away with the past.

How can I let this shame fade away? It is because I am not the person now that I was then. I do not dwell in shame, remorse and bitterness. Yes, I am guilty of a lot of things. But I now believe I am worthwhile.

Our natural instincts are to try to forget painful memories. At times I often wondered when doing my inventory how bringing up things in the past, opening up old wounds, could possibly help. I now know that the

past memories can make me feel grateful for my happiness today.

Last night (a Friday night) I was making sandwiches for our group's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. My wife was doing laundry and walked into the kitchen for a minute. She saw me looking at the clock with a smile on my face. She saw that I had made the sandwiches, and asked about the smile on my face. I told her that I was just remembering that not too long ago, I would have finished many beers by this time on a Friday night. And I told her that I remembered that she would have been hurt and sad once again to see me on my way to another black-out. And how things are so different now. She smiled and said, "Well you're not guilty of that tonight, and so you don't have to feel ashamed because you disappointed me like you used to."

How's that for a "Remember When"!!

Dennis O.



## What Did You Do Today?

So you've been around for many years, helping to spread AA. You've worked like heck since you first came in — but what did you do today? I heard your pitch. It was kinda long, You really told them how you worked the Steps in '41, but how are you working them now?

Do you still get up from your nice warm bed when someone is in trouble? Do you grab your hat and AA book and get there on the double? Or have you forgotten the early times when you were sort of new? Maybe you've been around so long that AA is old hat to you? Maybe you're one of the Senior Saints, sober and satisfied.

Maybe you have forgotten when you were sick and when you darn near died? Maybe I shouldn't bring it up, maybe you're too blasé but just for the heck of it what did you do today?

Have you been around so cockeyed long you leave it to Barry or Sam, "cause you're not your brother's keeper, and you don't give a darn." Maybe tonight the fights are on or

you're going to the old ball game so what the heck, if the guy is sick he has only himself to blame.

Well, you have a perfect right to work your own AA way and you know you'll do it your own way, no matter what I say. BUT.. tonight before you go to bed, just look in the glass and pray, that you and the Lord know the answer to ....what did you do today?

*(anonymous poem).*

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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

**E**bby T. was a long-time drinking buddy of Bill W.'s. It was hard to believe that he would bring a message of recovery that would change not only Bill's life, but successive lives for the next sixty-nine years. According to Bill, Ebby was a much worse drunk than Bill had been. So when Ebby appeared at Bill's doorstep looking vibrant and alive, the shock of seeing him made an unforgettable impression on Bill.

It was August 1934 when drunken offenses forced Ebby into court. His friends, Cebra G. and Rowland H. made an appeal to the judge for his release in their care. As members of the evangelical movement called the Oxford Group, they felt Ebby could be saved. Believing in conversion experiences, they sobered him up and he 'got religion' as he described it. In giving testimony, he carried the message to Bill W., the most hopeless drunk that he ever knew.

Bill and Ebby met in their teens in Vermont where Bill was born and Ebby's family vacationed in the summer. Coming from a prominent family from Albany, New York, Ebby arrived in the world with the proverbial 'silver spoon in his mouth'. It was perhaps due to this birthright that he felt entitled to things in life that came with little or no effort. He attained long periods of sobriety, however, his inability to work with others and give back left him "around" AA instead of "in" AA. Thinking that he did not receive the recognition that he deserved for his contribution to AA was one of many reasons he resented Bill, Dr. Bob and many others. In time, he returned to drinking.

Ebby died sober in March 1966, after living for two years in a loving recovery home. Bill W. always affectionately referred to Ebby T. as his sponsor.

Bernadette MacL.

## Have You Heard?

### Recent Medallions

**Tom B.** 1 yr., *Westmoreland Group*. Jan 13

### Upcoming Medallions:

**Gus P.** 1 yr., *Westmoreland Group*. Feb. 3.

**Tom C.** 20 yrs., *Sunnyside Group*. Feb. 5.

**Lela M.** 5 yrs., *Scott Mission Group*. Feb 7.

**Helen A.** 30 yrs., *Westmoreland Group*. Feb. 10.

**Elsha V.** 10 yrs., *Royal York Group*. Feb. 17.

**Alex P.** 5 yrs., *Westmoreland Group*, Feb. 17.

**Art W.** 25 yrs., *Pathfinders Group*. Feb 25.

**Marc H.**, 1 yr, *East York Group*. Mar. 16.

### 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.

**ELEFThERIA (C) GREEK** [Thurs 7 p.m. EAST] – meeting discontinued.

**Easy Does It (O)** 7:30 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays (NORTHWEST) discontinued.

**First Things First Discussion Group:(C)**. Tues. 1:30 p.m. (SUBURBAN WEST) will now be known as *Restoration and R 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.

**Special Events, Conventions & Conferences** More information on all these events is available on the bulletin board at the GTA Intergroup offices (address below).

**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 \$26. (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. Bbox 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).

### How to reach us

Submit group news, medallions, other event notices, letters to the editor or articles to BETTER TIMES (before Feb. 10 for the Mar. 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.

## Reasons and Priorities

**M**any, many years ago, in the early seventies and eighties, when I was a loveable, so-called 'Social Drinker', after my tour of duty, which ran into weeks, on my way home to my beloved wife and four darling children, my thoughts were always focused on my children. "God, I hope none of them are ill. God, I hope they've all gone to school." With this fervent prayer on my mind, I would get off the bus right in front of the popular 'Lallah's Arrack Shop' in Perambur, India, just a few doors away from my home.

Off the bus, with briefcase in hand, I'd walk businesslike into the Arrack shop. After downing two quick ones, lighting up a 'bidi', waiting for the stuff to take effect, again businesslike with briefcase in hand, I'd walk straight home.

On arriving home, (if my fervent prayers mentioned above were answered) the first thing I'd do is "make love". Priority accomplished; the next thing I'd do is put my briefcase down.

As time went by, as it usually does, my alcoholism progressed. My reasons and priorities changed. I definitely always got off the bus and went to Lallah's. That became my priority. That "fervent prayer" was always on my mind, but for a different reason. I didn't want my children to see me drunk.

Drinking was no fun anymore! And on reaching home – if ever I remembered when I reached home – I found I didn't give a damn about "love" and, on occasion, I found I had lost my precious briefcase.

Ronny H.

## Turning It Over

**T**here comes a time in facing a challenge when we have done all that we can, and still the situation remains unresolved. This is the time to turn the problem over and release our cares into the hands of spirit. When we let the Universe take charge, anything becomes possible. God can do for us what we could not do for ourselves.

If you find that you have reached such an impasse, try the following: in your mind's eye place the problem upon an imaginary altar. Then say, "I turn this over to you, spirit. From now on, you are in charge." As you walk away, know that all is in Divine hands.

Despairing of ever getting published, a young writer used this approach: he placed his manuscript on his inner altar and moved on to another project. Two weeks later, the book was accepted by a major publisher for a substantial advance. Turning to his agent he said, "I want to thank whoever is responsible, because it certainly wasn't me."

It is good to realize that we do not have to do everything alone. Help is available. Invisible hands come to support us at the right time. As the psalmist assures us, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."  
Jim M.

## Intergroup Report

**General Meeting**  
 Tuesday, December 16,  
 2003

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** 33 group reps, 6 District Liaisons, 7 Subcommittee Chairpersons

Chairperson's Opening Remarks – Derek F. (St. Clements)

Finance Report – David H. (Erin Mills), Finance Chairperson. If the estimates and projections materialize, the year will end with a deficit of approximately \$2,000. (Full report available from 234.)

**Subcommittee Reports**  
 Reports edited for brevity.

**SELF-SUPPORT** – Mark C. (St. Joseph St. Mtg.), Operating Committee Liaison

This committee has a new Chairperson; Phil M. (Bayview). This committee would welcome an invitation from groups for Self-Support members to attend and address a group business meeting in future; in addition, enthusiastic AA members wanting to help out this committee with this task can contact this committee c/o 234.

**ACCESSABILITY** – Stephanie K. (Hill), Chairperson. This committee needs a new Chair. Resumes to 234.



**CORRECTIONS** – Jim N. (Scarborough), Corrections Chairperson. This committee needs a Secretary, Alternate Chairperson, and Corrections Chairs for both District 10 and 12; resumes to 234. The Don Jail needs volunteers. Please call Don Jail Volunteer Coordinator Sheri Murphy (416) 325-0006, and she will send interested members the appropriate paperwork, etc. The 12th Annual Correctional Facilities Day will be held on Sat. Feb.7, from 9

a.m. to 3 p.m. at Glebe Road United Church

**GRAPEVINE** – Dan McK. (Half Century). If members would like a Grapevine display at your group / event, please put in your request in the Grapevine mailbox at 234.

**INFORMATION AA DAY** – Gary L. (Recovery), Operating Committee liaison. The event will be held all day on Sat. May 15, 2004 at Lansing United Church. Tickets should be ready by late February.

**ORC** – Clay R. (Pine Hills), ORC 2004 Chairperson. Clay emphasized that the cost for the event is \$26, not \$25 as stated in the Better Times. It was reported that everything is on schedule (hotel, banquet, speakers, etc.). The ORC 2004 will be held on March 19, 20, and 21 at the Royal York Hotel.

**RECEPTION** – Donna M. (Thorncliffe Park), Operating committee member. A Traditions Workshop to be held on Sat. Jan. 24 at 1300 Leslie [St. Bonaventure Church, where the Don Mills group meets]. Tickets are \$15 (Donna has tickets) and the day features a hot buffet lunch.

**TWELFTH STEP** – Donna M. (Thorncliffe Park). Phone Volunteers are still needed!

**TREATMENT FACILITIES** – Diana M. (Thorncliffe Park), Chairperson. This committee needs a new Chairperson! Please send resumes to 234. They also need a Secretary.

**WEBSITE** – Gord MacK. (New Anchor), Operating Committee 1st Vice Chair. Positions such as Webmaster are opening up; resumes to 234.

Meeting adjourned with the Responsibility Pledge.

## Greetings, Greeters!

I used to have a friend who, when he would answer the phone, would say: "Hello, Phone!" because he was answering the phone.

However, if you have a year of sobriety, you can upgrade to answering the phones at 234, Intergroup's head office: "Alcoholics Anonymous. How can I help you?"

Though many calls are routine – people calling about times and places for meetings – there are also calls from people at their wits end, in the throes of alcoholism.

It just might be you who gets to listen to a desperate, suffering alcoholic, who is faced with losing everything (including their sanity) and who is

reaching out for help. You may be able to comfort them by sharing your personal experience, strength and hope, and letting them know that recovery is possible and that there IS a way out.



People like you are needed to answer the phones at 234, even if it's only for one afternoon a month. Otherwise, all the caller would get would be a dead line and a hum. And we know what that's like.

*Tom S., Twelfth Step Committee*

## Never Too Old!

So you think you are too old huh? Well here's why you are never too old to accomplish your dreams. At age 53, Jerry was living alone in a room, nothing but

a cot to lie on, very few clothes, unshaven, unbathed, broke, depressed, suicidal, and unable to work.

At age 54, Jerry put the cork in the jug, cleaned himself up, started eating and bathing regularly. He got a job and spent all his spare time helping other people who were like himself.

At age 64, Jerry had his family back around him, a wife, an ok car and a reasonable income from regular work. He had a roof over his head and food in his stomach.

Yes, today Jerry, at age 67 (almost), is very happy with his life.

All this was made possible simply by joining Alcoholics Anonymous, staying sober and helping others do the same, to the best of his ability with the help of God.

*Gerald (Jerry) H.*

## Anniversary from Page 1

recover. Now I am in a room where everyone is gay and sober and I realize that I'm drinking because I'm an alcoholic, not because I'm gay." We knew then that we were on the right path.

With the support of our straight AA friends, and as our numbers kept growing, Intergroup agreed to list our meeting. The group conscience chose the name "The Twelfth Tradition".

In 1985 we made our fourth move, to St. Peters Anglican Church at 100 Carlton St. at Bleeker. The group has met there ever since and celebrated their 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>. Meeting time is 8 p.m. every Wednesday evening. All AA members are welcome at this or any other of the eight gay meetings listed, except the "Free To Be" meeting, which is for women members only.

*Jack McD.*