

BETTER TIMES



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BETTER TIMES
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Why Are There Two Books?

Dan, a longtime member from Alabama, recently shared, "If you are using that old 12 and 12 to understand and interpret this program better in a way useful to you ... keep right on using it" Further on he wrote, "As in all things AA, if it can't be reconciled to the Big Book - it's opinion" It is on the latter point that this entire topic rests... Just which book is The Book?

I can agree with Dan, because he clearly states that if you want to get a better understanding and interpretation of WHY the steps work, the Conference Approved 12 and 12 is an excellent source. It is Bill's interpretation based on his personal journey. However, I contend that the 12 and 12 is not a good book to learn HOW to do the steps. That is the function of the Big Book.

Taking Dan's advice about

By the Book

reconciling it to the book, I will offer up the following to underline my understanding based on a little-read part of the 12 and 12; The Foreward.

"After three years of trial and error in selecting the most workable tenets upon which the Society could be based, and after a large amount of failure in getting alcoholics to recover, three successful groups emerged - the first at Akron, the second in New York, and the third at Cleveland. Even then it was hard to find two score of recoveries in all three groups."

Nevertheless, the infant Society determined to set down its experience in a book, which finally reached the public in April 1939, when recoveries numbered about one hundred.

The book, called *Alcoholics Anonymous*, described alcoholism from the alcoholic's view, the spiritual idea of the Society was codified for the first

time in the Twelve Steps, and the application of these Steps to the alcoholic's dilemma was made clear. The remainder of the book was devoted to thirty stories, or case histories, of drinking experiences and recoveries. This established identification with alcoholic readers and proved to them that the virtually impossible had become possible. The book became the Basic Text of the Fellowship, and it still is.

By its own writings, the 12 and 12's purpose is to broaden and deepen the understanding of the method of doing the steps as written in our Basic Text (read the Beginners' Guide). It's also my contention that the Big Book left the explanation of the WHY to experiences of members who used this method. The 12 and 12 was written by Bill to share his experience and understanding of WHY the steps worked for him.

In the Foreword to the First

See Book page 4

UNIONVILLE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Late in the summer of 1954, a group of relatively new members of AA became convinced that there was a need for a new group in the suburbs of Toronto. The ideal location for this new entity was to be somewhere in the northern reaches of Agincourt which, at the time, was one of the more rapidly growing areas of north Scarborough.

Their search for premises took them even further north than they had planned.

When they finally were accepted by St. Phillips Anglican Church at the extremity of Kennedy Road they realized they were, in fact, in the village of Unionville. Undaunted, they merely adjusted the group's name, and the Agincourt Unionville Group was founded on November 24, 1954.

Spearheaded by such active members as the late Tommy H. and Bob D., the group was a success from the start. Oddly, for no specific reason, the group was almost exclusively male for many years. Gals would come, but after a time, they moved to



other groups where sober sisters could be found. In time, however, the women came to stay and today they form about 55% of the group's active membership.

Some years ago, to avoid confusion with the many other groups in Agincourt, the name was changed to Unionville. In 1986, they moved further north when St. Phillips Church moved to a new building and became St. Phillips-on-the-Hill in Unionville/Markham. Literally thousands have found sobriety in the Unionville Group in the past 50 years and the members continue a tradition of being active contributors to the service community in the GTA.

Come and join today's members of Unionville when they celebrate 50 years of Gratitude on November 24th at 8:00 p.m. at St. Phillips on Kennedy Road north of 16th Avenue.

John G.

Last month, our front-page lead article for Gratitude Month was titled "What is Service?"

I wanted to add in another phrase to the Headline, "Service IS Gratitude" (I got it in as a sub-head - hah!), as the article was actually bridging the gap between "Fiscal Gratitude" - the classic Seventh Tradition - and "Active Gratitude" - Involvement and Pro-active Effort on behalf of the Fellowship - as broadly outlined in the Responsibility Pledge. It's all very well to mumble about wanting the "Hand of AA to always BE there", but if you don't take your hands out of your pockets and do a few things, chances are they either won't get done or they will EVENTUALLY - like being 'Put On Hold' for a couple of months or so, for example!

Think about that for a

The Editors Say... "Gratitude IS Service" – We Built It, But They Didn't Come

minute...most of our members are here because they made 'That Call' - the one to AA about "A friend, who had a real drinking problem and where could you take him (or her)?" Maybe you even called about yourself. What would have happened if you had been 'Put On Hold' for a couple of months? We all know the answer to that one!

The person who answered the call wasn't afraid of doing things like answering the phone, talking to a complete stranger, and helping them. That's Service. That's Involvement and Pro-active Effort on their part.

They probably found out about Service by going to a Service Day, and that got them

enthused enough to get involved. They say Service is habit-forming and you've got to give it away to get it back.

There were two Service Days last month - one for District #22 and one for the Public Information Committee. I was flattered to have been asked to speak at both of them, but I note with sadness that there seem to be fewer new people showing up at Service Days than in the past. Sure, we get the "Active Hands" - those who are already involved in Service - but the purpose of a Service Day is to inform, explain and attract members of the Fellowship into Service in either a specific committee or a variety of areas.

The content and speakers at both Service Days were excellent and it's a great pity that more new people didn't take the time to come and find out what Service is all about. They were both on Saturdays in September, and since there were no blizzards those days, maybe the weather was too nice.

There's a Lottery Commercial that says, "If you don't PLAY, you can't WIN"! In my mind, Service is like that. First of all it can (and should be) Fun - that's the PLAY part - and the busier I am in Service, the less time and chance I have to screw things up! That's the WIN part!

So, to all those new(er) people who missed those two Service Days last month - with information, great speakers, Fellowship, Fun and Food, it was your LOSS.

Kevin M.

Live And Let Live

Hello Constant Readers. This month 'Live and Let Live' is our monthly slogan. At first I used to hear in the beginning of my AA career that this meant 'Mind Your Own Business' but there is a little more to this slogan than meets the eye.

First, there is the word "Live", which is something that we all need to learn to do and apply it to each day of our sobriety. It is only by practicing the AA way of life each day, to the best of our ability, that we can prepare ourselves for the second part of this slogan. It is difficult to assist another member unless we have experienced the same difficulty, and found an answer to it.

'Let Live' is the part very easily summed up in MYOB and then it often gets discarded. Actually this

part is the most important to help us stay on the right path and in carrying the message to the alcoholic who needs help. First, it is not up to us to decide who needs our help or when they need it. That is entirely up to them, and we can only help if they indicate they need help by their questions or outright search for help. This can most

often be requested during a discussion meeting, where individual topics are suggested by a person, indicating that they are having trouble with a certain phase of the program. Not only is help immediately forthcoming from several sources, but it is directed at the individual problem.

Another way one can help is, rather than take it upon ourselves to tell someone exactly what to do, we can describe what we did or experienced in the same conditions. We could even suggest that a particular problem, because of its highly personal nature, be discussed with their sponsor. This may sound like we are just looking for an out, but really it is an admission that we are not prepared to help with the problem because it is not in the area of our own experience.

"You have to walk that walk if you want to talk that talk."

Love In Sobriety..Joe C.



Fear to Faith

When I came into the program of AA I was so full of fear. I had no feelings. I was fearful of everything and my finances were 'nil'. My emotional state was bankrupt and I had an EGO that most of us have. I was full of anger, anxiety and felt abandoned from the world. When I was drinking at home with friends or in a crowd, I felt alone. I also had an attitude.

I felt full of rage and resentments, and I retreated into my own world. I didn't believe in AA the first two times I went through treatment. I thought God had abandoned me all my life, and wondered "Why would He care now after all the things I had done to myself, my family and many others?"

When I finally asked for help from MY heart, (and not for my job, family or friends) something happened. When I told my manager I needed help with my drinking problem (even though I don't remember) I was told to do whatever I needed to do, and that she would handle everything from her end.

I ended up in the hospital and then went to a detox for five days. I had made a call to a treatment centre for my an

See Faith page 4

Archives Alley

Herbert Spencer

One of the many widely held beliefs in AA is stated in Appendix II of the Big Book. Under the heading 'Spiritual Experience' is the following quote: "There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance - that principle is contempt prior to investigation." Herbert Spencer was the writer of this popular passage.

Born in Derby, England in 1820, Spencer was a British philosopher and sociologist. He was the only survivor in a family of nine children. His was an undisciplined and informal education and, much like his schoolteacher father, Herbert was unconventional with an anti-establishment viewpoint. For many years, as writer, news editor and social scientist, he refused to read authors with whom he disagreed. After many of his books were published, he was nominated for a Nobel Prize in Literature, which he declined. He died in 1903 after a lengthy illness.

His most notable quote has been used extensively by philosophers. Bill W. put this quote of Spencer's immediately following the statement of willingness, open-mindedness and honesty, which are essential for the recovery of alcoholics. AAs were quick to perceive the symmetry between Spencer's widely used citation and "Keep an Open Mind", one of the sayings that grace the walls of AA rooms. The principle embodied in it is not lost on those who wish to recover from a 'seemingly hopeless state of mind and body'. 'Keeping a man in everlasting ignorance' certainly has a familiar ring when it comes to the alcoholic's denial, narrow-mindedness and intolerance.

Students of the Big Book have long studied this particular passage, often as a timely reminder to avoid judgmental attitudes.

Bernadette MacL.

Have You Heard?

Recent Medallions

Glen J. 10 yrs, *Sunday Northwestern*, Sept. 26
Zipporah R. 1 yr, *Scarborough Centenary*, Oct. 7
Grant C. 1 yr, *Scarborough Centenary*, Oct. 14
Colin T. 1 yr, *Friendly*, Oct. 25

Upcoming Medallions

Ron S. 1 yr, *Friendly*, Nov. 1
Jack R. 45 yrs, *Kingsway*, Nov. 3
Moira S. 5 yrs, *Saturday 2 p.m. Meeting (at the Scott Mission)*, Nov. 20
Dan M. 40 yrs, *Lawrence Plaza*, Nov. 21
Dodie B. 30 yrs, *Erin Mills*, Nov. 29
Lynn L. 10 yrs, *East York*, Nov. 30
Steve G. 15 yrs, *Westmoreland*, Nov. 30
Pat P. 25 yrs, *Agincourt Acorn*, Nov. 30
Francis A. 15 yrs, *Crossroads Big Book Disc.*, Dec. 1

Group Anniversaries

Westmoreland Group (CENTRAL) celebrates their 25th anniversary on Tues. Nov. 9. *Open meeting; all are welcome!*

Unionville Group (SUB. NE) celebrates their 50th anniversary on Wed. Nov. 24 at 8 p.m. *Open meeting; all are welcome!*

Things We Cannot Change...

Paul T., beloved husband of Pat T. passed away in Bancroft, Ontario on Sept. 19. He had over 27 years of sobriety. Recently, Paul along with his wife had co-founded the *Gratitude Group* in Bancroft. Paul first got sober at the *Six Points Group* and then joined the *Parklawn Group*.

Neil T., of *Belleville*, (formerly *Bloordale Group Toronto*) passed away October 14, 2004. He was over 38 years sober.

Meeting Changes

Main Street Meeting Sundays 1 p.m. EAST has a name change: **Free Radicals Big Book Disc.** All other info remains the same.

Last Chance Group Tuesdays 8 p.m. SUB.NW is now an Open Discussion (O/C), with an Open Speaker on the last Tuesday of every month. **Last Chance Discussion Mtg** Thursdays 8 p.m. **DISCONTINUED.**

Steps to Sobriety Saturdays 7 p.m. GREAT NEWS - **The meeting HAS RESUMED.** Please come and help support our Open Topic Meeting. St. Steven's Presbyterian, 3817 Lawrence East. Downstairs Rear. We look forward to seeing you.

Morning Disc. Meeting (at the OISE Building) Monday to Friday 7:30 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. **CENTRAL: meeting now on 6th Floor.**

York Group (O) Thursdays 8:30 p.m. **CENTRAL is DISCONTINUED.**

West Toronto Women's Meeting Sundays 11 a.m. (WEST) is a **closed discussion meeting.**

SPECIAL EVENTS, CONVENTIONS, and CONFERENCES

'Free at Last' **MANITOBA KEYSTONE CONFERENCE** November 5,6,7 at the Ramada Marlborough Hotel, Winnipeg (1-800-667-7666). AA Central Office (204)942-0126. *See flyers.*

Third Annual **EAST YORK ROUNDUP** Saturday, November 6 at St. Columba Church,

2723 St. Clair Ave East, east of O'Connor Drive. Cost: 7th Tradition at door. Doors open at 11 a.m. Opening Remarks: 12 noon. Al-Anon Family panel, Women's panel, Longtimer's Ask It Basket, Pot Luck supper, Keynote Speaker, sobriety countdown. *All Welcome!*

20th Annual ARCHIVES BREAKFAST

Sunday, Nov. 7 at the Oasis Convention Centre (Mississauga). Tickets \$25. Guest Speaker: Gail L., Akron AA Archivist. Tickets available 234. *Watch for flyers.*

District 50 Cornwall AA CONFERENCE

'57 Years of AA: Spirituality*Gratitude*Growth' November 12 and 13, Ramada Inn, 805 Brookdale Ave, Cornwall. Al-Anon participation. Banquet and Dance. AA Speaker: Lee Y. (Orlando FLA). For more info: Mike L (e-mail address): tlvacrec@glennet.ca. *Watch for flyers.*

'Gratitude' 51st Annual WESTERN ONTARIO CONFERENCE

November 19, 20, 21 - Hilton Hotel, London, Ontario. Spiritual Meeting, Longtimer's Panel, Institutional Panel, dances Friday and Saturday night, Banquet Saturday night. For information call Joselyn (519)451-1527 or Susan (519)474-4545. *Watch for flyers.*

28th Annual SPIRITUAL NEW YEAR'S EVE

& DANCE Fri. Dec. 31 at Holy Rosary Parish Hall, 354 St Clair Ave West at Bathurst (St Clair West subway station). Parking in rear of hall (enter drive on west side). Doors open at 9 p.m. 9:30 p.m. - 11 p.m.: AA meeting in Main Auditorium. 11:30 enter adjoining church for Candlelight Interfaith Gratitude Service, to be followed by a Pot Luck Buffet and Dance. **Tickets \$10 in advance; \$12 at the door. Ticket information (416)487-5591.** Food Donations (Casseroles, Cold Cuts, Cheese and Crackers, Desserts, etc.) appreciated. **Volunteers for this committee needed and welcome! Next Committee Meeting Fri November 19 at 7:30 p.m. at 234.** *Watch for flyers.*

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

WINTER SEASON OPEN HOUSE NEEDS MORE COOKS!!! Due to expansion and a bigger kitchen, the Winter Season Open House Event needs **MORE VOLUNTEER COOKS** for Christmas Day 2004! Don't be a 'turkey', come out and cook one! Free dinner, too! **Call Kenny C. to volunteer (416)762-1176.**

Correction

In the October 2004 issue of **BETTER TIMES**, we published an error in Archives Alley on Page Three.

"The Wilsons lived in the house for the rest of their lives. Bill spent almost 30 years there until his death in January of 1971. Lois lived on for 17 years. It is now a trust foundation preserving the history, artifacts and papers of Bill and Lois."

The Committee apologizes for the error, and for any confusion it may have caused.

Gord MacK. - Editor

October is Gratitude Month, and Intergroup finances are going in the right direction. Donations are up, sales are up and expenses are down. The Finance Committee attributes this trend to the message being sent to spread donations out throughout the year beginning to sink in.

Just in time for the 2005 Budget, which will be presented at the October meeting. It will include costs to lease a new photocopier, which should save on printing costs in the end. The Finance Committee is still looking for another member, by the way.

Also at the October meeting will be the semi-annual elections for the Operating Committee (followed, perhaps, by the monthly filler elections for the ones that drop off, but that, I suppose, remains to be seen).

- Volunteers are needed for the Self-Support Committee.
- Volunteers are needed for the Access Ability Committee (particularly 'able-bodied')
- Volunteers are needed for the Corrections Committee (for the 'inside').
- Volunteers are needed for the CPC Committee.
- Volunteers are needed for the Info AA Day Committee.

Intergroup Report

OVERHEARD AT A MEETING!



- Volunteers are needed for the Treatment Facilities Committee ('Over-Chairs' for hospitals).

Are we seeing a trend here as well? Perhaps the request from Acting Chair, Dominic A., for Committee presenters to "keep it short" helped, but it almost seemed like someone forgot to lift the needle of the record player (and the newcomers are now asking "What's a 'record player'?")

The BETTER TIMES has asked the Web Site Committee to publish issues TWO months behind instead of one, as it was learned that some (I don't want to use the words) were waiting to print their copy so they didn't have to cough up the quarter.

In other news...

The Archives Committee is looking for donations of an 8mm projector, a reel-to-reel tape recorder and some narrow shelving. I'm not sure if a camcorder

would do – I guess you would have to ask them. The Grapevine crew is considering loaning its District displays to Group Grapevine Reps for a month to boost the buzz. And although it's over a year and a half away, we are hearing some news on the 2006 ORC already. The theme will be 'People, Program, and Prayer', and the price jumps to \$30 from \$26 (\$55 now for the Banquet).

As for the comment by the Twelfth Step Committee liaison that some other Committees are "luxuries", I wonder to whom he was referring? While I do understand the frustration of having no one showing up to man the phones, this reference was nearing the 'lack of decorum' of a BETTER TIMES Editor. Kudos, Lynn.

And finally, in an effort to offer more "Vision for You", another motion has been made to have Intergroup sell Hazelden Books. Now, before you come out swinging, think about it. It's not such a bad idea. Intergroup will rely less on those donations they have to beg for every year, and people can buy virtually thousands of books that all prove one point – the Big Book is all you need. It's Win-Win. Let's get on with it.

Gord MacK.

Faith (from Page 2)

assessment, and was I was assessed, once I was released from the detox. The first question they asked was why they should take me again, for a second time.

I replied, "Because I need help."

That was the beginning of my journey in recovery. I attended meetings on my own for the first time. I entered the treatment centre with a different attitude. I had surrendered and accepted that I was an alcoholic. The desire for a drink was gone. I also valued the tools that I was willing to read and I started opening up in all the sessions in the treatment centre for the first time. That is when I found hope and faith in the rooms in AA. I was able to deal with my feelings and forgave myself for what I did to myself first. I did what I was told, "go to meetings, get a sponsor and join a group." I learned to be honest with myself and others to the best of my ability for the first time.

Today, my life is great. Things do not always go the way I want them to; they go the way my Higher Power, Whom I call GOD today, says they should. I humble myself and deal with what is put on my plate today. Drinking is no longer an option. Living One Day at a Time is the only way to survive the

disease of Alcoholism. What I have today is my self respect, family and so much more. I owe my life to GOD and the Program of AA.

I must give it back to keep it and I must Keep Coming Back (because Alcohol can kill).

Terry H.

Book (from Page 1)

Edition in the Big Book, it is written: "To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book."

The 12 and 12 is offered to newcomers far too often with the inference that this book will tell them how to do the Steps. As a result, there are many new members who complain of being confused about HOW to actually do the steps, and sadly are often told, "We cannot tell you HOW to do the steps ... do them anyway you feel like".

My question is, "What is the purpose of meeting together if not to share HOW to do these Steps?" A member who studies the 12 and 12 finds no instruction on how to do the steps, and must turn to our Basic Text, or beginners book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

By reconciling what I am saying with the books themselves, to remove fact from opinion, I hope this will be helpful to anyone

GTA INTERGROUP Meeting Directory Update

An updated Meeting Directory will be printed in the near future. We ask that **any groups wanting to update, correct, and / or change their current information** please contact Alexx or Carole at 234 (416) 487-5591 or use the on-line Meeting Information Change Form on the website www.aatoronto.org. **DEADLINE FOR CHANGES:** Friday, November 5, 2004

who may have wondered about the relationship between and purpose of these two excellent books.

Rick A.
12 Traditions Group, Pickering