

BETTER TIMES

February 2007
25 cents per copy



Contents

Ontario Regional Conference 2007.....	1
Joan the Hat Celebrates 30 years.....	1
The Editors Say.....	2
For the Sake of Discussion.....	2
Reasonable Expectation of Spousees.....	2
Archives Alley.....	3
Have You Heard?.....	3
Information AA Day.....	4
Condolences.....	4
An Alcoholics Antidote.....	4
No Option.....	4

BETTER TIMES

Published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area
234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 202
Toronto, ON M4P 1K5
Telephone: 416-487-5591
Fax: 416-487-5855 TTY: 416-487-5062
Email: btimes@aatoronto.org
Web: aatoronto.org

Editorial Committee:

Bernadette MacL., (Editor), Romana K., (Ass't Editor), John P., Jim H., Tim R., Ed R. (Desktop Pub) David N. (Cartoonist)
Opinions Expressed in **BETTER TIMES** are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Greater Toronto Area Intergroup.

How To Reach Us:

Submit group news, medallions, other event notices, letters to the editor or articles to **BETTER TIMES** (before the 10th of the month prior to the month of issue), by mail, fax or email. Only signed submissions with a means of contact will be accepted. For subscriptions call Alexx 416-487-8110.

Tradition

Two

*For our group purpose
there is but one ultimate
authority—a loving
God as He may express
Himself in our group
conscience. Our leaders
are but trusted servants;
they do not govern.*

Ontario Regional Conference 2007

It's hard to believe that the Ontario Regional Conference is just around the corner – a true harbinger of spring. It seems such short time ago that I was sitting in the audience of the 2006 ORC taking note of meaningful snippets – something that I could perhaps use in my remarks to close the conference.

Little did I realize that the seed of this year's theme would be sown there. Steve L. from Tennessee talked about the fight being worse than the surrender. That thought stayed with me and when I saw the old-time slogan "Surrender to Win" at the Freedom Friday meeting, it clicked. Thankfully, the rest of the Committee concurred.

The 2007 Committee is working hard to encourage pre-registration. We are holding four draws for pre-registrations received in November, December, January and February. The prizes are a complete CD set of the Conference. Jan M. of the Fellowship Group won the Novem-

ber draw and Mary C. of the Sunshine Group in Orillia won for December. We are also very pleased to announce that every pre-registrant will receive a \$5

who have reserved with the hotel (use promotion code GRORC1). This weekend can be used for the conference or at any time over the next year. The winner will be drawn at the March ORC meeting.

Of course, no conference can be a success without lots and lots of volunteers. We need volunteers for greeting (the ORC is well known for the helpfulness of its many greeters), for registration, the literature table and many other areas. Please complete the volunteer forms on the website (www.aatoronto.org), see your Intergroup Representative or call 234 to be directed to one of the ORC Committee members.

As with last year, every ORC meeting and every speaker serves at least one gem that sparks our sobriety for the next year. Please join us on March 16th, 17th and 18th to celebrate our sobriety.

*Barbara H., Chair 2007
Welcome Group*

voucher to be used against a minimum \$20 purchase of tapes or CDs.

Another exciting offer is the draw for a free weekend at the Royal York Hotel from those

Joan the Hat Celebrates 30 years

Joan A., Agincourt Acorn, is a person that you cannot miss at a meeting. First of all, she always sits in the first chair in the first row. She is almost always wearing a big wide brimmed hat (hence the nickname "Joan the Hat"), significant sized rings on her fingers and when she first came to AA, she smoked cigars. She is one of the most outgoing and friendly people that I know.

Joan meets almost everyone with a big hug; the kind that makes you feel welcomed, wanted and loved. Then she leans back a little, looks you in the eye and asks how are you doing and cares enough to listen. She earnestly tells you that everything is going to be ok.

Joan is also very honest and will tell you when she is having a bad day. She taught me a very important lesson early in my sobriety. She was having a bad

was about 3 months sober and she was 15 years sober and the lesson for this newcomer was that I can have bad days and stay sober even after 15 years.

Joan is very active and has a keen eye for the newcomer at a meeting and has helped a lot of alcoholics over the years; both men and women. Joan and her husband, Herb, who is an Al-anon member, are active helping in both fellowships.

On January 9, people gathered to celebrate Alcoholics Anonymous and one of its members. People spoke about the hats and the cigars but most of all they spoke about how Joan has helped them and their family in recovery.

Tim R. Chartwell Group

day and at a discussion meeting she said so. She didn't try to cover up by repeating what we here so often "Things are fine, glad to be here". At that time I

The Editors Say...

I am Responsible!

Some meetings close with the Responsibility Declaration. One definition of responsibility is to be "accountable for one's actions." One of the things I avoided as an active alcoholic was responsibility. If I did something wrong or if something was done to me, it was because I was drunk. Drinking provided the perfect excuse "I'm sorry I did that to you but I was drunk at the time."

I think one of the reasons we fear and procrastinate doing a 4th Step is that once we see our part in resentments, fears and sex conduct, we have to take responsibility. Until we do a 4th, we are ignorant to the character defects that drive us and make us do the things we do as active alcoholics. 'Ignorance is bliss'.

After we have finished the 4th Step and have taken ownership for our defects of character, we talk with another person about it. Now two people know. It's difficult to continue behaving

in this manner when someone else knows the root(s) of your problems.

Another definition of responsibility is "legally or morally obliged to take care of something or to carry out a duty." After asking God to remove my shortcomings I now have to take responsibility for the well being of those whom I hurt. This I did in Steps 8 and 9.

Finally after further developing a relationship with the God of my understanding, I am ready for the ultimate responsibility; to carry the message of recovery to the still suffering alcoholic, to sponsor another alcoholic and guide them through the 12 Steps of recovery.

The spiritual axiom in Step 10 tells me that I have to take responsibility for my actions and behaviors today. Today, I am responsible because of the 12 steps and the God of my understanding.

Tim R., Chartwell Group

Reasonable Expectations of Sponsees

"Expectations are resentments waiting to happen" – is a quote often heard around AA. So perhaps having expectations of sponsees new to AA could be 'mission unreasonable,' but I don't think so. When one expects nothing, one gets nothing! So expectations can work!

When a newcomer asks me to be their sponsor, I explain that I will share my experience with the tools of AA. I expect, because they are at AA, that they feel they have a problem that needs some pretty major changes. I came to AA because I was sick and tired of my life. I did not know what my problem was, but knew deep inside that how I was living was not normal or good for me. I expect that all

new people at some level share that awareness.

It is quite simple what I expect: I expect a sponsee to go to meetings, lots of meetings, daily if possible. I expect them to read our texts for they are the roadmap to recovery. I expect regular contact by phone at the least, in person weekly at best.

I expect a degree of honesty about their drinking. I can read between the words!

Truthfully I am delighted if the program "takes" on first try, but often surprised if it does. As alcoholics WE DRINK – that is what we do, and to be sober is in opposition to our natural state. When we stay sober it truly is a

For The Sake of Discussion

Very recently, the publicist for a prominent young Hollywood actor announced that his client was attending meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. Prior to that, the prestigious New York Times had published speculation on the same event, suggesting that such revelations are now considered of sufficient public interest that the privacy of the individual can be ignored.

For most of us, this is an unwelcome and perhaps even alarming turn of events.

Indeed, the increasing frequency of public pronouncements by celebrities that substance abuse is to blame for bad behaviour is exceeded only by their inability to maintain any level of secrecy concerning the treatment program they are enrolled in. While the passage of time and the proliferation of information regarding the nature of addiction have improved the level of understanding and tolerance for the addict, nevertheless the 'guarantee' of anonymity by the fellowship of AA remains a bedrock attraction for most.

Quite apart from the immense spiritual significance of the principle of anonymity enshrined in our Traditions is the very real comfort it provides the still suffering alcoholic.

Despite crushing desperation, many members of my acquaintance would have been extremely reluctant to approach AA

gift of grace from a Higher Power!

As long as a sponsee is showing her/his best effort to stay sober, and do the 'do' things, I will be there for them.

Sponsorship is a mutual relationship that offers incredible benefits, rewards, and growth for both members of our beautiful fellowship. You can expect that for sure!

Andrea W., King City Group

for help unless considerable assurance was available that their professional colleagues, as well as their neighbours and friends, would remain unaware of their attendance.

Despite the obvious merit of the second half of the name of our fellowship and primary literature, I do have friends who are quite 'open' about their membership and even suggest that there could be some value in 'advertising' the successful recovery of certain of our more well known attendees. It is not a theory that I find appealing. I have known too many of our fellows who have returned to drinking to be convinced that anyone has a life long certainty of sobriety. In fact, those most likely to 'slip' include an unusually high percentage of those who are characterized by success and publicity.

By maintaining our anonymity outside of our meeting rooms and encouraging others to do so, I believe we are being true to our Steps and Traditions. This topic causes one to recall Tradition 12 somewhat automatically. I would suggest that it is Step 12 that is most involved. Only by remaining true to our concept of anonymity can we continue to be of service and attraction to the still suffering alcoholic.

John G., Unionville Group

Another New Year...

Well it's 2007, so that means yet again one more Spiritual New Year's Eve Dance at Holy Rosary Parish Hall. Everyone's saying they had a great time at the meetings and the dance. Phil (from the Medallion) spun a lot of good ol' tunes. My thanks to all the volunteers: Helen and friends in the kitchen, Jim and Tim (drinks), Christina and John for decorating. And clean-up only took an hour and a half the next day! I'm already looking forward to the 30th annual event at the end of this year, it should be better than ever!

John P., Welcome Group

Archives Alley

Dr. Bob

Dr. Bob died on November 16, 1950. He was seventy-one years of age and was sober for 15 years.

He was born in St. Johnsbury, Vermont that had a population of about 7,000. His father was a professional and both parents very religious. As an only child, he was well schooled and churched. Robert S. was determined when he was free of parental discipline, he would 'never darken the doors of a church' again.

His drinking became a problem during his college years and settling on a career in medicine didn't change a thing. At one point his father had to rescue him when he came very close to being thrown out of school because of his drinking. Securing an internship in a western city for the next two years forced him to work so hard he hadn't time to return to his "excessive indulgences." However, once he opened up a private practice he slipped into his old ways very quickly. He quickly discovered that he could easily prescribe for himself as a doctor during prohibition. That removed that obstruction. He lived for years working to drink and drinking to sleep.

Dr. Bob held that his life was sustained by his loving wife, Anne. She encouraged him to get involved with the Oxford Group whom he respected greatly. However that did not stop him from drinking.

In early May of 1935, there was the infamous meeting at the home of Henrietta Sieberling with Bill W. Though a disappointing relapse three weeks later, he stayed sober till the end of his life. His craving for alcohol persisted for two and a half years after he got sober.

Bob was diagnosed with cancer in 1949, the same year his wife Anne died. He passed away a year later.

*Bernadette MacL.,
King City Group*

Have You Heard?

RECENT MEDALLIONS

Name	Yrs	Group	Date
Bill M	35	Ajax Area	Jan. 14
Cathy L.	20	Willowdale	Jan. 11
Andrea N.	1	Unionville	Jan. 17
Vivian W.	1	Kingsway	Jan. 17
Richard P.	1	Kingsway	Jan. 24
Lesley L.	1	Unionville	Jan. 24
Rick	1	Shepherd	Jan. 9
Derek H.	10	New Anchor	Jan. 25
Bill H.	5	Bellamy	Jan. 25
Robby R.	25	King City	Jan 26

UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Name	Yrs	Group	Date
Will be celebrated later in the year			
Angus D.	15	Aurora	Feb. 1
Bill W.	20	Wanstead	Feb. 2
Cheryl M.	5	King City	Feb. 5
Doug H.	5	Bellamy	Feb. 5
Gareth J.	1	Unionville	Feb. 7
Jim McM.	25	King City	Feb. 12
Bill O.	20	Kingsay	Feb. 13
Ted S.	30	Kingsway	Feb. 17
Paco A.	1	Kingsway	Feb. 17
Reg P.	20	Scarborough Centenary	Feb. 22
Betty F.	50	Armour Heights	Feb. 26
Jill D.	20	Scarborough	Mar. 9
Shelly H.	1	Westmoreland	Mar. 10

THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE...

Carol A., past member of the Glenholme Group, 5 yrs sober, passed away December 28, 2006

Bill F., Islington Group passed away on December 31st.

MEETING CHANGES

Kennedy Park Group, (O) Monday 8 p.m., Konko Church of Toronto, 398 Kennedy Rd., (SW corner of Kennedy and Danforth), Scarborough

U of T Group, (O) Sun. 5 p.m., (C) Mon. 5:30 p.m. (C) Thurs. 6 p.m., OISE bldg., 252 Bloor St. W. (east of St. George St.) please "watch for signs" in the lobby and elevators as the meeting room sometimes changes. Thursday meeting is now Big Book/12 and 12.

NEW MEETINGS

The Step Eleven Meeting (C) Tuesdays 12:15 noon (CENTRAL): Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave (one street N of St. Clair, off Yonge St). Meeting focus: Step Eleven & meditation. BYOC ('bring your own coffee?'). One-hour duration.

Lawrence Plaza Discussion (C) 8 p.m. Thursdays (NORTH): St. Leonard's Anglican Church, 25 Wanless Ave., 2 blocks N of Lawrence Ave, on Yonge St. (behind fire station). Step discussion.

MEETINGS NEEDING SUPPORT

Kennedy Park Group, (O) Monday 8 p.m., Konko Church of Toronto, 398 Kennedy Rd., (SW corner of Kennedy and Danforth), Scarborough

Mount Dennis Group Thursdays (Closed Step Discussion) 8 p.m. (WEST): 71 Guestville Ave., S of Eglinton, W of Weston Rd. Open Speaker Meeting on Mondays at 8 p.m. Call 234 for details.

Pourquoi Pas? (French-speaking) Saturdays (C) 11 a.m. (CENTRAL). 22 College St. Closed discussion.

Beverly Hills Group Fridays 8 p.m. (NORTH WEST). Greenborough Community Church, 2000 Keele St. N. of Eglinton Ave. This meeting (which has been in service for 36 years), is regularly visited by many treatment centre newcomers. The group needs support in the form of Chairpersons and Speakers. See flyers for details and contact information.

Lawrence Plaza Group 8:00 p.m. Sundays (NORTH) (O). New time and location: St. Leonard's Church, 25 Wanless Ave., 2 blocks N. of Yonge & Lawrence (behind fire station).

St. Patrick's Group Tuesdays: Big Book study (C), 6:45 p.m.; open speaker meeting (O) follows at 8 p.m. (CENTRAL) St. Paul's RC Church, 83 Power St., at Queen St. East, east of Parliament.

Don Valley Group Tuesdays 8 p.m. (O); Thursdays 8 p.m. (C) Step Discussion. (NORTH) Advent Lutheran Church, 2800 Don Mills Rd., 2 blocks N of Sheppard Ave. East at Don Mills divide, Don Mills subway (Sheppard subway line).

Parklawn Group (O) Fridays 8:30 p.m. (WEST) is in need of attendance, Chairpeople, Speakers, and new members. Humbercrest United Church, 16 Baby Point Rd., Jane and Annette St.

Centenary Group Monday (C) Thursday (O) 7 p.m. (NORTHEAST)

Sunday Scarborough Group (O) 8 p.m. (EAST)

Freedom Friday Group Friday (C) 8:15 p.m. (CENTRAL)

Friendship Room (O) Friday 6:00 p.m. (CENTRAL)

SPECIAL EVENTS, CONVENTIONS, and CONFERENCES

Ontario Regional Conference Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto, March 16, 17, 18

Information AA Day

Recently I have been hearing various versions of how the Information AA Day event and set-up committee operate. Let me take just a moment to clarify both these vital roles.

First, Information AA Day has been going since 1979. It was set up so the delegate, after returning from the General Service Conference in New York, could share what happened at the conference with the general service districts in Toronto. At that time there were 7 districts in the Toronto area and Toronto Intergroup. This was done to save time and costs in traveling to the districts individually.

In addition to the delegates report it was decided that a service day and a guest speaker along with a potluck lunch would make it an interesting and well-rounded day. The date has always been set to occur after the conference, which is in April. The guest speaker is generally someone from the General Service Office in New York. The set-up committee estimates the costs and decides the amount of donations requested from each service arm and the ticket price.

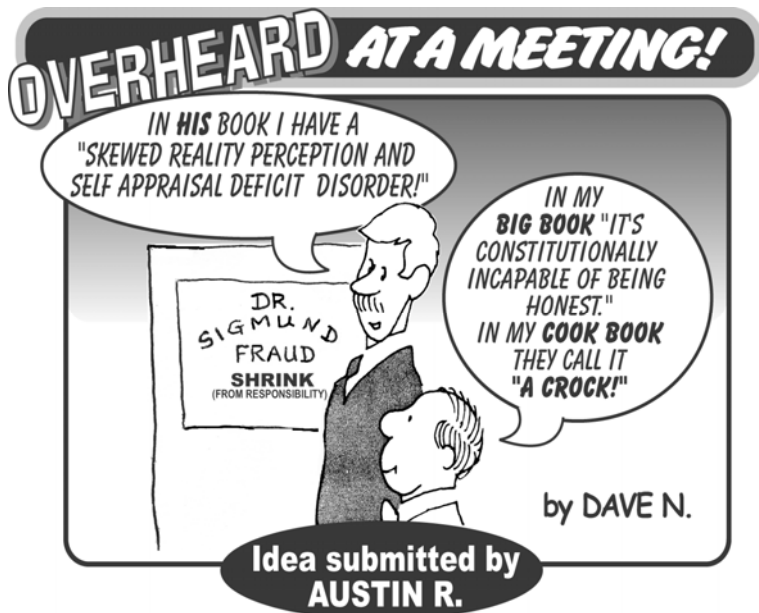
Second, the set-up committee is composed of the District Committee Members and their alternates from the 8 districts, and members of the Toronto Intergroup operating committee. Each year the chair alternates between general service and Intergroup. The committee is a collaborative effort of both arms of service, the General Service Districts and Intergroup.

The committee is not set up so that General Service does it one year and Intergroup does it the next year. It is a committee and event that stands alone, that is, it is not a part of Intergroup and not a part of the General Service Districts. It is comprised of both service arms.

I hope that I have clarified this issue, but, if you still have questions please do not hesitate to contact me at (416) 265-5909 or at the Danforth group on Thursday evenings.

Yours in Love and Service

*John M. Past Chair
Info AA Day Committee
DCM District 18*



Idea submitted by
AUSTIN R.

Condolences

Toronto Intergroup has made available the opportunity to make expressions of sympathy in the memory of members of AA who have passed away.

Simply send your donation to
'Toronto Intergroup' at
234 Eglinton Avenue East
Toronto, Ontario

The family of the decedent will receive a beautiful memorial letter from the staff.

An Alcoholic's Antidote

- Take aloneness, despair, disappointments, fear and remorse of a suffering alcoholic.
- Add 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous
- Mix well with hope, compassion and example
- Stir in many hand shakes and smiles
- Sprinkle generously with laughter
- Saturate frequently with coffee or tea
- (preceding ingredients found at AA meetings)
- Fold in a Higher Power only they can understand
- Set timer to "ONE DAY AT A TIME"
- Sift out fear, doubt, resentment and self-pity
- Discard as many character defects as possible
- Welcome with understanding, warmth and a sprinkling of hugs
- Blend in group participation and activity
- Allow to simmer at their own speed
- Top abundantly with Love.

*Submitted by Jim H.
Keep it Simple*

NO OPTION

Sometimes as a newcomer I would sit in meetings and hear someone share about coming back from a slip . . . and then someone else shared about when they came back from their slip, and someone else shared about the last time they went out . . . and I would sit there and start to plan my slip. I am so grateful that someone explained to me that having a slip was not necessary, is not required, and that the stories I am hearing are from the people who made it back from their slips. The ones that I'm not hearing from are the ones who thought, "well I'll just have a slip and then go back to AA" and they wound up in jail, still drinking, or dead. Having a slip is not an option. Staying sober is the solution.

Author Unknown